

NEW VOCABULARY

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As I have progressed in my journey with my Lord, I have become increasingly aware and convicted of the sloppiness of my words as I attempt to describe this walk. I suspect that this is a malaise that affects nearly all of us. Just recently, I was sharing with my friend Gerry my desire to enter into and live in that realm of the Spirit beyond the veil, to *live* in the presence of God, not just experience His presence from time to time. I know that Gerry understood perfectly what I was saying, but he responded with a mild rebuke: *“You ARE in the presence of God continually Chuck; it is just a matter of you being continually aware of it.”* That rebuke stopped me short. I realized that it is not a matter of my somehow having to position myself (or even be positioned by God) in that realm. He has already positioned me there! It is a matter of my words lining up in agreement with the truth of my spiritual location, with Him in the secret place. My words will either affirm or deny this reality. Affirming the place in which I live is essential to acting out of and from that realm of the Spirit.

For this critical reason, I am now correcting my vocabulary in that regard. More importantly, I am realizing afresh how crucial our words are as we negotiate this terrain of the Kingdom of God into which we have entered.

Our Words are a Window to Kingdom Realities

Recently, I wrote an article entitled "[New Glasses](#)," in which I pointed out the importance of recognizing the reality of God residing within us, these temples not made with hands. Truly understanding the "geography of God," we have a new perspective from which to understand ourselves, the world around us, and indeed, the nature of the Kingdom of God itself as it is presented in scripture. An important feature of these "new glasses" is the vocabulary that we use to describe the reality that we can now see with greater clarity. Failure to use words that effectively convey this reality will keep us stuck in an old paradigm that will hinder our progress in the Lord.

There are multitudes of ways in which our words betray us and reflect a false and limited vision. We are fond, for example, of extolling the virtues of "freedom of religion," especially in the United States, but also in many other countries of the world. This is so ironic because such a phrase is really an oxymoron when we understand the true meaning of the word religion. Lynette Woods clarifies the meaning most poignantly:

The etymology of the word "religion" is quite revealing. It stems from two words: re (again) and ligare (meaning to bind or tie, a bond or obligation). Religion puts people into bondage and blindness again and again. It is part of the curse because it separates us from God. It is something which has been part of mankind ever since Adam and Eve decided to trust themselves and their own judgments rather than trusting God and we are daily faced with this same choice: trust God or Self. (Woods, 2008).

The truth is that our freedom is not a freedom of religion at all. Rather, the freedom that we enjoy is a *freedom of the Spirit* that derives from the life of Christ that emanates from within each and every one of us. This freedom is not dependent upon any "rights" that are guaranteed in any jurisdictional constitution. It is time to update our lexicon. "Religion" is simply not a word that should be in the vocabulary of a Spirit-led follower of Christ, except possibly when

intentionally referring to those institutions created by man that have erroneously been called “the church.”

This, of course, brings us to another of those words in our vocabulary which has taken on an entirely inappropriate meaning—I am referring here to “church.” Our English word “church” is derived from the Greek word *Kyriakos*, meaning “belonging to the Lord,” or “related to the Lord.” It is used only two times in the New Testament, and in neither of those places does it refer to the body of Christ. In one instance, it is used in reference to the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), and in the other to the Lord’s day (Revelation 1:10). The term that the Biblical writers used to refer to the body of believers was the Greek term *ekklesia*, referring to a body of people who were called apart for a distinct purpose. Indeed, as I have pointed out in an earlier article entitled [“Ecclesia: Taking Back Our Identity”](#), the term was typically used in that day to refer to a political gathering of town elders or other governing group who were specially called apart for governance over a particular political jurisdiction. These writers were very careful NOT to use the more “religious” term *sunagogue* (from which we derive our English term synagogue) which was the gathering place of Jewish religious leaders. **These early disciples of Jesus were clearly separating themselves from any sense of religious identity.** They saw themselves, rather, as a body of people who were called apart unto an alternative jurisdiction, that being the Kingdom of God. The words they used to identify themselves mattered. They were not just another religious sect, as many of the Jewish and secular leaders of the day thought them to be. They were, rather, part of God’s grand masterplan to further the advancement of His very Kingdom within them and so upon the earth!

We, too, must be careful to adopt a language that reflects the Kingdom reality in which we live. Too often we speak of “going to church,” referring to getting in our cars and traveling to a building with a steeple located on the corner of Fifth and Main. If we are a little more sophisticated, we speak of the church as consisting of the people who are sitting in the pews. Even this understanding, however, obscures our vision of the nature of that to which Paul and other writers refer to as the body of Christ, which we are. The gospel writers had it right: *we are the CALLED OUT ONES*. We have been called apart, “outside the

camp,” separated from the *sunogogue*.¹ When Sarah and I are asked “What church do you attend?” increasingly we find ourselves answering, “What do you mean? We ARE the church!” This is sometimes a little off-putting to people, but it conveys the truth that we have been called apart from the religious systems of man.

I could go on *ad infinitum* with the ways our vocabulary has misrepresented the spiritual reality of that to which we have been called. My purpose here, however, is simply to emphasize that our words provide a window into the reality that we perceive and from which we operate. When we choose our words carelessly and erroneously, the view from the window that we behold is an altogether false image. This in turn has consequences for the way in which we negotiate the uncharted terrain in which we find ourselves at this time in God’s timetable in which we are experiencing a transition from what is commonly known as the “church age” to what I and others have termed the “kingdom age.” Just as those early disciples, who found themselves in a time of transition between the age of the law and the church age, were very deliberate in the vocabulary they used to describe themselves, we too must be so diligent.

Words Have Consequences

Most of us who have gone through school in western countries were trained to understand that vocabulary words describe certain realities. When we were toddlers, we were shown a color and were asked “What color is the grass?” We would respond “Green!” We were then given a hearty pat on the back and were then asked, “What color is the sky?” to which we would respond “Blue!” Again, we were rewarded with accolades that built our two-year old confidence. As we progressed in our education, our vocabulary became richer and much more complex so as to describe the nuances of reality around us. This was, of course, wonderful education, and an individual with an extensive vocabulary is a tribute

¹ I recognize that there are many called out ones who gather in church buildings every Saturday or Sunday. If they are truly members of the body of Christ, however, they have been called apart unto Him. Their loyalty is to Him and Him alone, and not to the institution. I believe that, except for those whom God has called to remain in the institution for His own prophetic or priestly purposes, those who are truly part of His body will eventually find themselves coming out of the institution.

to parents and teachers who did their job well. This education, however, had another “latent” or hidden effect. It taught us that our vocabulary is but a reflection or expression of the reality that it attempts to describe. Nothing could be further from the truth. The words we use have tremendous power that go far beyond merely describing reality around us. They impact that reality and have a profound effect on one’s daily experience. Indeed, they have the power to either facilitate or inhibit our journey to full maturity in Christ.

A Brief Lesson from Social Science

Many years ago, sociologist C. Wright Mills (1940) penned an article entitled “Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motives” in the leading journal of his discipline. In that article, he contended that one’s vocabulary actually shapes one’s perception of reality and in turn their behavior. This article represented something of a paradigm revolution in his discipline. To more fully appreciate Mills contention regarding the power of words , it might be helpful to consider the work of two other sociologists/criminologists who were trying to understand juvenile delinquency, and why some kids who would get into occasional trouble would go on to become full-blown juvenile delinquents, while others engaging in the same acts would grow up to be law-abiding young people. Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957) discovered that the hardened delinquents that they studied routinely engaged in what they termed “techniques of neutralization.” These were verbal “excuses” that they used to justify their behavior. One such technique was “denial of responsibility,” in which the would-be delinquent justified their behavior because they were the victim of a bad home life or other circumstances beyond their control and therefore could not really help what they were doing. Another was “denial of injury” in which they contended that they didn’t really hurt anybody so what was the harm? (Shoplifters would often use this excuse, claiming that the stores were insured for their losses anyway, so no harm was really done.) Still another was “condemnation of the condemners” in which the delinquent would insist that the injured party really who was accusing them deserved the injury caused them. (Here again, shoplifters would say things like, “They have been ripping us off with their jacked up prices all these years, and so they deserve to be ripped off in return.”) Sykes and Matza identify a total of

five of these “techniques” of neutralizing one’s delinquent behavior. It is important to point out that these authors were not saying that these were mere excuses for delinquent acts already committed; they were suggesting, rather, that these were verbal justifications that provided the motivation and incentive necessary to continue on in their wayward behavior. Their words actually contributed to shaping their future behavior. Vocabularies clearly have power, as Sykes and Matza found that these verbal gymnastics were *not* used by kids who did not go on to become delinquents following their initial misdeeds.

One further example might be helpful to drive home the consequential power of words. Researchers have noted that nearly all children go through a phase of stuttering in their early developmental years. This is usually mild and often goes unnoticed by parents and others. A study of children who went on to stutter as adults revealed a remarkable pattern. Those who went on to stutter had the regrettable experience of others (typically parents) expressing concern over their childhood stuttering and drawing undue attention to it. Such excessive attention of the parents created a “labelling” effect whereby the child began to take on the identity of the label imposed upon him or her of “stutterer.” Those children who grew out of their childhood stuttering tended to not have such dotting attention placed on their speech pattern. The parents’ words wielded a powerful influence over the lifetime of the child (Lemert, 1951).²

The Power of Words on Our Journey of Faith

The discovery of the potency of words by social scientists should come as no surprise to any serious follower of Christ. Ironically, however, we too often fall prey to the powerful impact of our words when we simply use our words to convey the apparent reality that we see and experience around us. We wake up in the morning feeling aches and pains and before we even think about it, we begin complaining about our physical ailments; before you know it, we are complaining about everything around us that doesn’t suit our fancy. And did all this complaining improve our day? Predictably, it only made it worse. I often

²I recognize, of course, that there are many factors that contribute to stuttering. Too often overlooked, however, is the power of words in even such a neurological/physiological phenomenon as stuttering.

wonder how many people go to an early grave simply because they spoke sickness and death over themselves just about every time they encountered some physical malady.

I am speaking here of merely the natural world, of course. Because that which we perceive with our natural senses appears to us as the true reality that we live in, our vocabulary is prone to describe that reality, be it positive or negative. What we so often fail to realize is that in speaking forth what we see in the natural world around us, we are doing much more than simply describing that world. We are also reinforcing it every time we so speak. We hear of wars and rumors of wars. Podcasters of all stripes are prophesying economic crashes, food shortages, government takeovers and just about every doomsday prediction conceivable. As we get caught up in the web of fear that they are weaving, we find ourselves speaking these “realities” to ourselves and to those around us. Before you know it, we find ourselves in fear, and responding to that fear in ways that only reinforce and even exacerbate our experience of the negative perceptions of reality around us.

What people of God must realize is that our true habitation is in another realm altogether. It is out of the reality of this *realm of the Spirit* that we must speak with words that accurately characterize that reality and beyond this, touch and transform the world that Jesus overcame with His words. This *Spirit reality* is not a reality that we will perceive with our natural senses—though as we continue to live in and speak that reality it will seem ever more real and natural to us. This is a realm that we perceive through our *spiritual senses*. Our spiritual senses are developed as we listen to that resonating and quickening voice within. The Holy Spirit may speak as we are reading scripture which He will quicken unto us in unprecedented ways as we listen. He may speak to us as we fellowship with others, listen to our children, or even through mundane tasks of washing dishes or mowing the lawn. There is no end to the mechanisms that the Holy Spirit will use through which to speak to us. It is important to realize that it is that quickening and resonating Word within us that constitutes our reality as spiritual people.

This is, furthermore, the reality that we must speak forth—even when it defies everything that the natural world around us would seem to proclaim. Scripture gives us some definite clues as to what it means to speak forth that truth. When the Pharisees inquired of Jesus when the Kingdom of God should come, for example, Jesus responded, *“The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you* (Luke 17:20-21). The Pharisees’ very wording of the question betrayed their understanding of the Kingdom of God. They understood it as something external—indeed, they believed it to be a political reign—that would take place sometime in the future. Jesus corrected their understanding—and ours. I wrote of this at length in the recent article entitled [“New Glasses”](#) to which I referred earlier. What is so important for us to understand at this time is that the very vocabulary that we use to characterize the Kingdom of God shapes our understanding of it. It is so very critical that we quit speaking of “going to heaven when we die,” or that we pray for “a visit from the Lord of glory in Holy Ghost power;” or indeed that we quit expressing our desire to “enter in to the realm of the spirit” as I mistakenly expressed to my friend Gerry. The truth is that the Kingdom of God reigns within us fully at this present time. We need instead to be thanking God for His presence within. It might be more fruitful to confess our tendency to keep Him at a distance outside of ourselves, and seek Him within ourselves for an enlargement of our awareness of His mighty presence within. The vocabulary we use, even in our praying, has a powerful impact on the experience of God that we have.

We are so easily lured into the trap of speaking that which appears to us to be reality in the natural. As we see the corruption and degradation around us, we are prone to bemoan these evils and then proceed to address them through our own carnal understanding. As we understand and speak forth the truth of the Kingdom of God within us, however, we realize that we must address that which is going on around us, with a new vocabulary, from the reality of that Kingdom. There is probably no more powerful demonstration of this principle than Jesus’ response when he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness. The circumstances that He was confronted with would make the devil’s solution appear so tempting

to the carnal mind. He was desperately hungry. “Just turn these stones into bread. You can do it. You’re God!” was the whisper of the enemy. Jesus knew that He could. But there was another reality out of which He spoke. It was the reality of the Kingdom of God which was within Him, from which came His response, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). Jesus knew the power of words, and He knew that the words that He spoke “proceeding out of the mouth of God” through Jesus’ very mouth were life and were His true bread. Oh, the power of our words!

Our Words Impact the Natural World Around Us

“And God said...and God saw that it was good.” The very material universe in which we live was brought into existence by the very word of God! As we speak the reality that comes forth from the realm of the Spirit, the natural realm is inevitably affected. Paul spoke of Abraham who believed against all natural odds God’s promise that he would be the father of many nations. Abraham believed God who *“calleth those things which be not as though they were”* (Romans 4:17). Abraham stood on the promise of God, even when he was asked to sacrifice his promised son Isaac. When Isaac noted the fire and the wood and asked of his father where the lamb was for the sacrifice, Abraham replied, *“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together”* (Genesis 22:8). Abraham spoke that which he knew by the promise of God—he refused to speak that which appeared to be the reality of his natural circumstances. As a result, God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled.

Whenever Jesus was confronted with sickness, death, or demoniacs, he simply spoke the Word of redemption to that situation. We do not read of Jesus engaging in the antics of holding large public meetings for healing, calling cripples forth to the front and having them throw down their crutches or dispose of their wheel chairs in any of the recorded accounts of Jesus’ ministry. It is true that He did on occasion require acts of obedience on the part of the recipients as when he daubed mud on the eyes of the man born blind from birth and told him to go

wash in the pool of Siloam. Even this, however, came forth from the mouth of Jesus as He was speaking from the realm of the Spirit within Him.

Some years back a friend related to me a powerful experience that she had involving a miraculous healing that took place. There was a woman (whom she had never met) who had contracted an extremely rare disease that left her in a coma. The doctors could do nothing for her and she was expected to die. A relative of this woman was relaying his fear of her inevitable death to my friend. The dying woman, in a hospital many miles from the church where they were talking, was young and would leave behind her husband and their three children. My friend hearing this had a young family herself. While listening to this hopeless and desperate man she was filled with the Lord's compassion and His desire to intervene. She was compelled by the Holy Spirit to tell this despairing man what the Lord said to her spirit:

“SHE WILL NOT DIE, the Lord will raise her up out of the coma and she will live!”

The man looked at her absolutely bewildered by these bold declarations. This was surely an act of faith to speak the word of the Lord to this man. All kinds of questions would naturally go through one's mind: “Why would he believe me? I'm a nobody and he doesn't even know me. Who do I think I am invading this man's grief and making such an outlandish claim? Besides what if I heard God wrong, and the woman dies? The man's grief will only be made worse and I will surely have egg on my face!” But my friend who shared the story with me claims that her spirit was at peace once those words were spoken and she was fearless and completely assured that the Lord would step into that hospital room and completely heal the dying woman for His glory! The following Sunday was Resurrection Sunday and my friend was in the church where she had spoken those powerful words to the man just the previous Wednesday. She was met by a woman she did not know who told her that she was sent by this man, and that he wanted her to know that the woman in the coma (his relative) had awakened from the coma and was healed just as she had spoken she would be. This man was with the woman in the hospital that day and wanted my friend to know God had done it! What an incredible gift to this young faithful woman on Resurrection

Sunday! My obedient friend never laid eyes on the dying woman, nor the man after she spoke the word of the Lord to him regarding his dying relative, but I suspect that a glorious reunion awaits them!

I recall another conversation that I had with a spirit-led pastor many years ago. This conversation took place some years after the fall of the Berlin wall in the 1980's. My friend and pastor recounted how he was in the shower one day just prior to the fall of that dividing wall. As he was in the shower, he distinctly heard a directive from the Lord to face the east. As he did so, he found himself calling for the fall of the Berlin wall. He did not understand it at the time. It was but a few days or weeks later that Mikhail Gorbachev authorized the dismantling of the wall. My friend was amazed, only to be further astounded when he learned of the testimony of several others around the world who had the same experience as did he. His words were world-changing!

Words Have Power

I cannot emphasize too strongly how important it is that we attend wisely and judiciously to the words that we speak. They frame the very world in which we live. When we speak merely that which we see through our natural eyes and experience in our natural man, we but reinforce the illusion that the serpent deceived Eve with back in the misty beginnings of time: *"Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"* (Genesis 3:4-5). We repeat Eve's transgression every time we speak out of the lower realm of flesh and carnality as we fall victim to the illusion that this fallen state is truly who we are. The serpent was speaking death to Eve, even though it appeared so logically appealing. And she repeated the lie to her husband. Oh how powerful unto death were those words that were spoken into the mind of Eve on that fateful day!

Friends, our words are no less powerful today, whether they be words of death or words of life. The wise man said *"A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; [and] with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. Death and life [are] in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof"* (Proverbs 18:20-21). Our Lord amplified this truth when he said *"(It is) Not that*

which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man...Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.” (Matthew 15: 11, 17-18).

Our words are either Words of Life or words of death. When we speak out of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we are speaking words of death. This is so, even when we are speaking out of the *good* side of that tree. These are words of death because they are coming forth from our natural man—from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—no matter how good or laudatory those words are. We are called to partake of the Tree of Life—which is the very Spirit of God—and to speak out of *that* Tree. ***It is not a matter of speaking good vs. evil; it is a matter of speaking life vs. death.*** The words that we speak come from one of these trees. We are partakers of the Tree of Life, and I challenge each one reading these lines to listen carefully to the words you speak. Do they simply reinforce the best (or worst?) of man—even man’s *religious* ideas? If so, you need a new vocabulary—one that reflects Truth as it is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. We must speak only what we hear the Father say! It is His word from His mouth that will transform our world from death to life, from hell to heaven, from darkness to light. This is the Kingdom of God on earth from where we are seated with Christ and co-reign unto life and immortality.

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