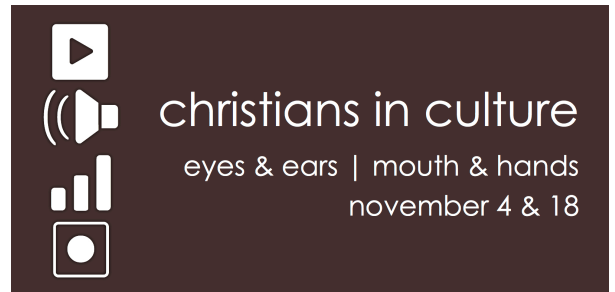


# Christians in Culture

## *Mouth & Hands*

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We're on the move. We have available to us today more information, media, and technology than ever before. No generation in human history has come close experiencing the kind of technological advancements, or information made available by those who took steps forward in the previous century. We are living in a special time

We have an ancient faith that originated in a place far, far away. We live in a culture far removed from Jesus'. What does our faith offer us in terms of guidance in what we consume through media, social media, entertainment and popular culture? And how should we be contributing, communicating and connecting with such limitless possibilities?

### **A First Language:**

- Rapid or online communication and social media aren't just tools, they are a first language of our culture.

### **The Bible and Communication / Speech:**

Scripture holds tons for us on the topic of speech and communication. It holds clear lessons, proverbial teaching, narrative, and warning.

- Genesis 1: 3 "Then God said..."
- God's words hold power and sway. He creates, forms and changes situations and the lives with them.
- We see this clearly in the entirety of the Hebrew scripture where God speaks to people and he speaks through people.

- He speaks through prophets, he writes on walls, he speaks to kings, judges and leaders, he speaks to normal every day people, he even causes a donkey to talk to get the attention of the man riding it. (Numbers 22)
- When John chooses to write his account of Jesus' life he describes Jesus mysteriously but brilliantly as "the Word made flesh".
- Complex communication, speech, oral tradition and the written word is crucial in God's interaction with humankind...and it's key in setting people apart from the rest of creation.
- Words hold power. Speech matters. We see this all over the Bible.

### **You and Me and Words (Proverbs):**

- Now, people have realized this for thousands of years, some of them chose to share the wisdom they accumulated with the rest of us. We can find a lot of this wisdom about words in certain places in the Bible.
- Proverbs was written mostly (we believe) by a man named Solomon who was the wisest person on the planet
- The Proverbs have quite a bit to say about speech and communication, about words.
  - Proverbs 12:18      Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
  - Proverbs 12:25      An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.
  - Proverbs 13:33      He who guards his lips guards his

life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

- Proverbs 15:1      A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
  - Proverbs 17:28      Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.
  - Proverbs 20:19      A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.
  - Proverbs 21:23      He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.
  - Proverbs 26:22      The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.
  - Proverbs 26:28      A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.
  - Proverbs 29:20      Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
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- There are a couple of rudimentary observations we can make from many of these Proverbs:
    - First, words affect people
    - Second, words betray the character and heart of people
  - What we see in Proverbs is the power of words in relationship. Person to person: Gossip, slander, encouragement, wisdom, the power to change a situation, a mind or a heart, for the better or the worse.

- What's inspirational about the Bible's treatment of how we should communicate with each other is that it goes far beyond "don't say this" or "be careful not to say that".
- The Bible teaches that your words, if they bring life, not death, hope, not despair, encouragement, not condemnation can make a genuine and lasting positive difference.
- They also deeply affect us, the people who are speaking them.
  - Eg: *"When the director of the CIA cannot hide his activities online, what hope is there for the rest of us?"* – CNN.com

### **Words and Wisdom (James)**

- Listen to Doug's message on James chapter three on the website or through the podcast.
- Key thoughts from James chapter three:
  - James, in his letter, takes a considerable amount of time talking about talking. He thinks this is important for his listeners!
  - James is considered, by many, to be Wisdom Literature (similar to Proverbs)
  - Wisdom Literature throughout the Bible (be it in the Old Testament or New), seems to imply that a wise person can be identified as such by how they speak.
  - So, as Christians, as bearers of the Good News, the wisdom and light of Jesus should be found throughout our lives, including what we type.
  - Words are currency and are costly. They are costly to those

around us, costly to us personally, and costly to Jesus and his message

- So, we can do a lot of damage...but we can also do a lot of good.

### **Wisdom for online or rapid communication:**

- *If there's doubt, there's no doubt.*
- *If you don't have anything nice to say...*
- *Consider your sphere of influence.*
- *Consider your identity as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus.*
- *Consider the lasting impact.* (Social network quote)
- *Consider where you are sharing your life (or pouring your heart out)*

### **Discussion Questions:**

- How connected are you? What do you use and why do you use it?
- What have you found challenging to navigate when it comes to online or rapid communication?
- Should Christians overly proclaim their faith online? Why or why not?
- How do Christians honor God (keep him central) and live in such a “plugged in” culture?
- What kinds of opportunities await us living in a culture so plugged in?