

SO SPEAK

The word “so” has only two letters but has twenty-two lines of definition in Websters New World Dictionary. For the purpose of the following article I will use the following definition of so: in such a way or in like manner. For example, John 3:16 says, ‘For God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...’ And we could rightly say by definition that God loved the world in such a way that He gave His only begotten Son.

With that said, the springboard for this article is a statement found in John 7:46. Before we get there, I thought it wise to read chapter 5 and 6 of John’s Gospel to better understand 7:46. In these two chapters we see Jesus doing miracles and teaching. In John 5, Jesus heals a man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. He feeds the five thousand in Galilee in chapter 6. He then walks on water in the stormy waters of the Sea of Galilee. In each of these two chapters we read that many sought to take him and kill him.

John chapter 7 begins with these words: “After these things...” Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, but he goes secretly because the Jews sought to kill Him. In the midst of the feast (7:14), Jesus appears in the temple and begins teaching. He draws a large crowd and His teaching causes commotion, controversy, and divisions

during which people wanted to take Him and kill Him but no one laid hands on Him.

The commotion was then reported to the Pharisees who, along with the chief priests, sent officers to the temple to take, or arrest, Jesus. The officers go to the temple and hear some of Jesus' teaching. Then they go back empty handed. Now we come upon 7:45: "Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?"

The officers' answer in 7:46, in my opinion, is one of the most profound statements that mortal man has ever made! "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). They were greatly impressed with not only what Jesus said but how He said it. Jesus' speech was not only like that then, but also like that now. This got me wondering how my speech should be.

I was raised by very godly parents. I remember very clearly something that my mom would say to me quite often: "You watch your mouth young man!" Following this admonition was a warning: "I'll wash your mouth out with soap." And she did. Then my godly father would come home from work and apply the "board of education" to the "seat of my understanding." You get the drift no doubt. My parents knew how destructive, divisive, etc. my mouth, lips, and tongue could be if left undisciplined.

The Scriptures tell us some troubling and terrible things about the human tongue and how despicable, dastardly, deceitful, and destructive it can be. To start with, the third chapter of James is primarily about controlling the tongue. James writes this:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

James 3:5-6

Verse 8 says, “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” And then verse 10: “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

The book of Proverbs mentions the tongue quite frequently. Here are a few verses for your perusal:

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD...

Proverbs 12:22

An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as burning fire.

Proverbs 16:27

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, *a lying tongue*, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, *a false witness that speaketh lies*, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Proverbs 6:16-19

The prophet Jeremiah was not immune to the tongue attack. Jeremiah 18:18 says, “Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”

King David knew right well how nasty the tongue could be. He prayed in Psalm 141:3, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” Oh, that believers would pray this.

So now believer, what should our speech be like as we audibly present the Word and the Gospel? How should it be in our home, the church,

to our neighbors, etc.? The Bible gives us the answer. Our speech should be:

- I. *Scriptural Speech* – The apostle Paul said to the church at Rome, “For what saith the scripture?” (Romans 4:3). And he repeated the same in Galatians 4:30. He told Timothy in II Timothy 4:2 to “preach the word.” In Matthew chapter 4 Jesus is in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Three times the devil tempted Jesus. Jesus answers all three of these temptations by saying, “it is written” (Matthew 4:4, 4:7, 4:10).

In Luke 24 Jesus appears to two people walking from Jerusalem where they had witnessed the trial and crucifixion of the Lord. They were going to their home in Emmaus and were discussing their hearing that Jesus was alive. Now when Jesus appeared to them, they did not recognize Him. He asked them what they were talking about and they told Him. He then began “at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). They arrived at their home and invited Jesus to stay with them. He did and “as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed

it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:30-32).

I will never forget the day back in the 1970s when I was seated in the daily chapel service at Hyles Anderson College. The guest speaker that day addressed the preacher boys in the audience and said something that still burns in my heart. He said, “Young men, if God said it, stand up and speak up. And if God didn’t say it, sit down and shut up!” Scriptural speech!

- II. *Sound Speech* – In II Timothy 4:2-3 the apostle Paul charges the young pastor to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.” Again, the apostle Paul charged Titus in Titus 2:1 saying, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” And again, in Titus 2:7-8 Paul gives this charge: “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound

speech, that cannot be condemned.” Notice that in all these references sound speech goes hand in hand with sound doctrine. And so, our speech should be doctrinally sound. Sound speech!

- III. *Seasoned Speech* – The admonition in Colossians 4:6 is, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Historically, salt has been used as a preservative for food and to make food more palatable. Mark 9:50 says, “Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.” Seasoned speech!
- IV. *Sanctified Speech* – Colossians 3:8-10 says, “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” Removing filthy communication out of your mouth equals sanctified speech.
- V. *Studied Speech* – “The heart of the righteous studieth to answer...” (Proverbs

15:28). Peter says in I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Paul instructs Timothy in II Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Studied speech!

- VI. *Strong Speech* – In Isaiah 58:1 God commands Isaiah to, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Strong speech!
- VII. *Soft Speech* – Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath...” Soft speech!
- VIII. *Satisfactory Speech* – “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). Satisfactory speech!
- IX. *Secure Speech* – As a reminder, Psalm 141:3 says, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

In conclusion, I draw your attention to a brief synopsis of Acts chapter 13. Paul and Barnabas preached a lengthy message in Antioch in Pisidia. They preached there on two successive Sabbaths. The Gentiles who heard were glad and many

believed (Acts 13:48), “But the Jews... raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them out of their coasts” (Acts 13:50). Then in Acts 14:1 we read these glorious words: “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.”

Dear believers, So speak.

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