

RUMOR ALLEGE  
SLANDER UNDERSTAND SAY  
CONVERSE DECIDE RECALL INTRIGUE PROCLAIM  
CHITCHAT WHISPER VOCALIZE CHAT SHOUT HEAR

# THE POWER OF WORDS: TALKING & LISTENING

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DISCOURSE UTTER DECLARE MURMUR EXPRESS  
GOSSIP LISTEN VERBALIZE CHATTERBOX MUTTER  
CONVEY SECRET DISCUSS ARTICULATE

# Introduction

From the beginning of this series of lectures on the tongue, it has been my intention to search the Scriptures with you to discover God's thoughts and intentions regarding human language and to embrace and submit to each one of His revealed directives and prohibitions regarding the use of our words with others. With majestic beauty, Ephesians 4:29 caused us to stand in reverent silence as the Apostle Paul painted a vivid picture of words emerging from our mouths, as if going on a journey. They leave our hearts where they are formed, he claimed, and travel upwards to our mouths, from whence they move forward to the tips of our tongues. From that position, they leap and spring into the air, enter the ears of those who hear them, and descend into their hearts where they are then interpreted and processed.

# Introduction

Scripture leaves us with no doubt that these words – unwholesome and healthy alike - produce powerful effects in the hearts of those who hear. Unwholesome words, on the one hand, are invisible bombs that explode in the soul, creating gaping wounds and lasting pain, while good words are invisible builders that leap into listening ears and go to work on the soul, making repairs (healing), reinforcing (strengthening), and putting on new additions (developing).

On many occasions, Jesus told His audiences that it was the heart – not the tongue – that was the source of their words. “But the things that proceed out of the mouth **come from the heart**, and those defile the man” (Mt. 15:18).

# Introduction

On the basis of our Incarnate Lord's own words, we categorically affirm His sole remedy for our untamable tongues and refuse to accept any proposed worldly-wise solution by which to extinguish this "fire, the very world of iniquity" (Jas. 3:6). "No one can tame the tongue," James insists, because "it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison" (vs. 8). No one, that is, except God. Every person controlled by the Holy Spirit bears His fruit, nine temperament character traits, including self-control. Therefore, we are able to live in Christ and to speak by the power of His Spirit, so that we may use our words for the edification of others, according to the need of the moment. As our words descend into their hearts, they are accompanied with God's amazing grace.

# Introduction

If, then, we long to speak God-glorifying words to others and change our sinful, habitual patterns of speech, we must first acknowledge that our own hearts are deceitful, wicked, and largely unknown to us. We must repent for the unseen damage we have caused in others who conceal their lingering pain and, in love, seek reconciliation with them through Jesus Christ. If this restorative picture is to become a reality, and if we purpose to use edifying words as a way of life, it is vital that we descend into the deep waters of our own hearts, as Solomon counseled, to discover the real source of all that we think and say about God, ourselves, and others. For all who are willing to take the risk – perhaps for the first time – there awaits new life and freedom.



# The Astonishing Vastness of the Human Soul

“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”

- I Cor. 2:11



# Astonishingly Vast - But Still Finite

There is so much depth to every human being that it can seem that we are infinite rather than finite. If we were to tell our story - or just part of our story - to an interested person or group of people, there is almost an infinite range of thoughts and experiences that we could share. Life has been so full that it feels as if we could tell thousands of stories over a very long period of time without repeating them. Every experience and encounter we had became a building block in our lives. However, we are not infinite, but finite. We are created beings and are compelled to remember that we will never know ourselves as God knows us, nor know others in the way they, or we, desire.

# George Sayer Meets J.R.R. Tolkien in Oxford

**Tolkien:** “How did you get on  
(with new tutor, C.S. Lewis)?

**Sayer:** “I think rather well. I think  
he will be a most interesting tutor  
to have.”

**Tolkien:** “Interesting? Yes, he’s  
certainly that. You’ll never get to  
the bottom of him.”



J.R.R. Tolkien

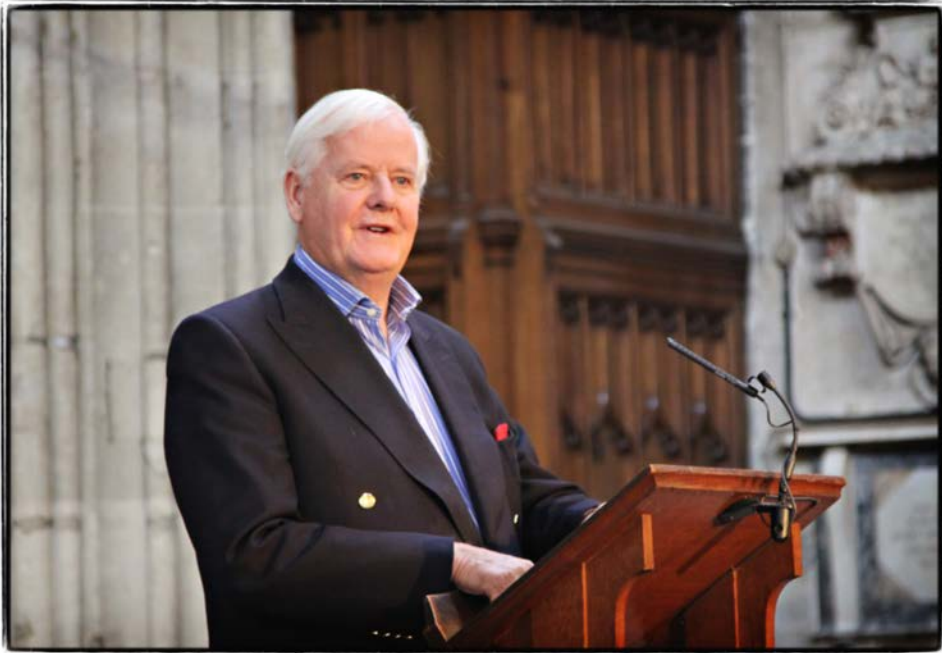


# The Enormous Capacity of Knowing

Man – male and female – is the very image of God. Having been made in His image, we have been given this enormous capacity to know, to think, to perceive, to feel, to observe, to make judgments, to discern, to comprehend, to understand, to become aware of, to scrutinize, to see, to acknowledge, to note, to detect, to recognize, and to learn.



# Os Guinness



**Os Guinness**

1941 -

“There is always more to knowing  
than human knowing will ever know.”

# Exploring Your Own Soul

I would like to invite you to go on a journey - to go deep into your own well (soul) in order to explore the many and varied ways in which you are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by your Creator (Ps. 139:14) and to ponder your own life story within the context of God’s grand metanarrative.



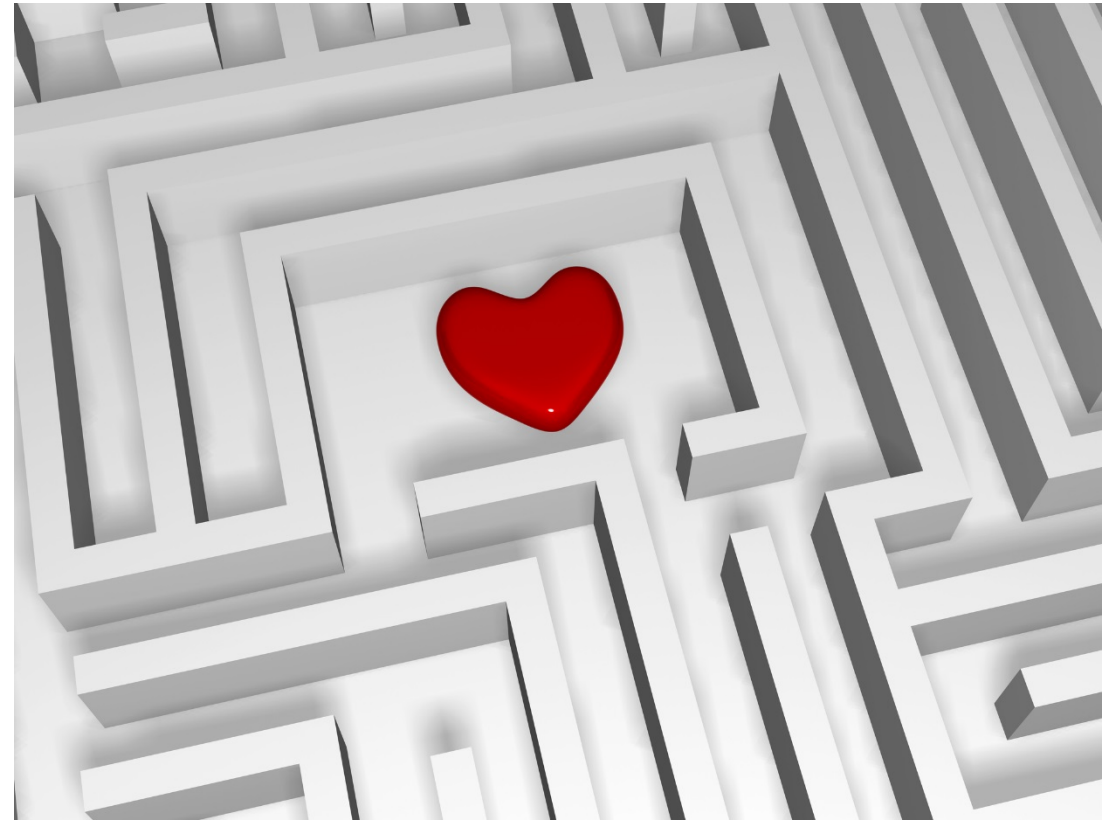
# Understanding Metanarrative



The word *metanarrative* is constructed from the words *meta* denoting change, transformation, permutation + *narrative*, a story. It is a story *about* a story, encompassing and explaining other “little stories” within conceptual models that make the stories into a whole. In Christianity, it is **God’s Master Narrative**, hidden and revealed, in which all of the stories of individuals and nations are woven together after the counsel of His holy will for His own glory.

# Refusing Isolation

In addition to striking out on our own, Solomon's simile reminds us that we are not encouraged to make the journey in isolation. Still waters are deep and we must guard against self-deception. If we are willing to listen to a man or woman of understanding, we will soon discover that they have the ability to draw us out and help us know ourselves as we really are.







# Begin With Prayer



- Lord, who am I? Who have I become?
- How have you made me? What unique gifts and endowments have you given to me?
- Lead me into deep, humble, and daily repentance before You.
- “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Ps. 139:23-24).

# Know Thyself: The Process

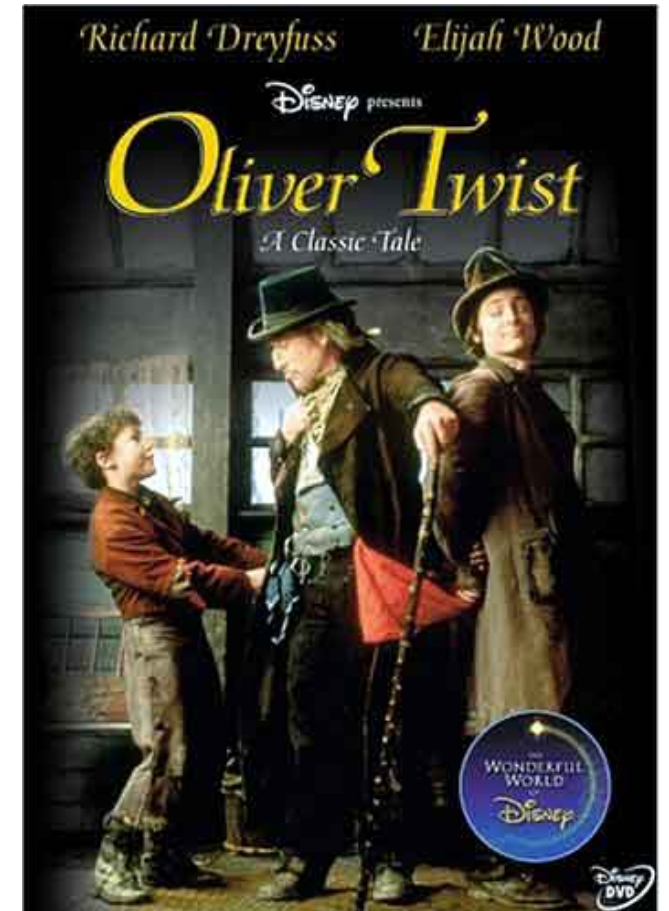
- **Interest & Desire:** Take the first step toward self-understanding.
- **Curiosity:** What do I need or want to know about myself?
- **Deep Reflection:** Find solitude and silence, for thinking is hard work.
- **Prayer:** Lord, who am I? Who have I become? What is the true state of my heart right now? What do my words reveal about my heart?
- **Acceptance:** The Correspondence Theory of Truth - knowing things as they really are. Knowing and accepting my heart as it really is.
- **Knowing God:** Who has He revealed Himself to be? How may I come to know Him and live in constant fellowship with Him?



# An Impenetrable Heart

“Tears were not the things to find their way to Mr. Bumble’s soul; his heart was waterproof.”

- Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*





# Overcoming the Temptation to Secrecy

“**Secrecy** is like a strongbox where we can piously keep treasures: some remembrances of some beautiful past, quite finished; some photograph carefully wrapped up and locked away; some manuscript begun with enthusiasm and which never dared confront publication, and which stays there, with its nostalgia, in the bottom of a drawer; some painting that the amateur artist has never been able to finish; some intimate diary with innumerable notebooks” (Paul Tournier).



# Categories For Exploration

- imago Dei (image of God)
- Sovereign Foundations
- Personal History
- Gifts and Talents
- Knowledge of Self
- Knowledge of God
- Present Realities
- Passions
- Wounds



# Correspondence Theory of Truth

- Correspondence Theory of Truth: holding a truth that corresponds to reality; reality is the totality of facts.
- Facts are not created by culture, language, or consciousness.
- “Facts are totally unforgiving. Facts are what we run into when we are wrong” (Dallas Willard).



**Dallas Willard, PhD**

1935-2013

Professor of Philosophy  
University of Southern California

# Exploring the Hearts of Others

- Solomon limits the range of qualified people who are capable of penetrating the heart of another person. He identifies only the “**man of understanding**” as having the skills to lower the bucket into another person’s well.
- By learning how to be **great listeners** and **safe confidants**, we take the first step toward loving our neighbors, enemies, and friends in the way they **need** to be loved.

# A Man or Woman of Understanding

- “Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a **man of understanding** remains silent” (Prov. 11:12).
- “Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense, but a **man of understanding** walks straight ahead” (Prov. 15:21).
- “Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a **man of understanding**” (Prov. 17:27).
- “Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a **man of understanding**” (Prov. 10:23).



# A Man or Woman of Understanding

The Hebrew word in our text (Prov. 20:5) means *understanding* or *insight*. “The background idea can be gauged from the fact that the verb ‘to discern’ is parent to both nouns, and the preposition ‘between’ is a near relation. Solomon put the two together in I Kings 3:9: ‘Give your servant therefore an **understanding mind** to govern your people, that I may **discern** between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?’”

“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to **discern** good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).



# God, the Source of Understanding

- “My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and **inclining your heart to understanding**; yes, if you call out for insight and **raise your voice for understanding**, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; **from his mouth come knowledge and understanding**” (Prov. 2:1-6).
- “Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets **understanding**, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Prov. 3:13-14).



# McKane's Explanation

“The eliciting of the ‘deep waters’ from another is a **skillful operation** which **only a perceptive person with power of intellectual penetration can perform**. It is as if a bucket had to be lowered into a deep well and then skillfully maneuvered to the surface filled with water.”







Acquaintance

Casual

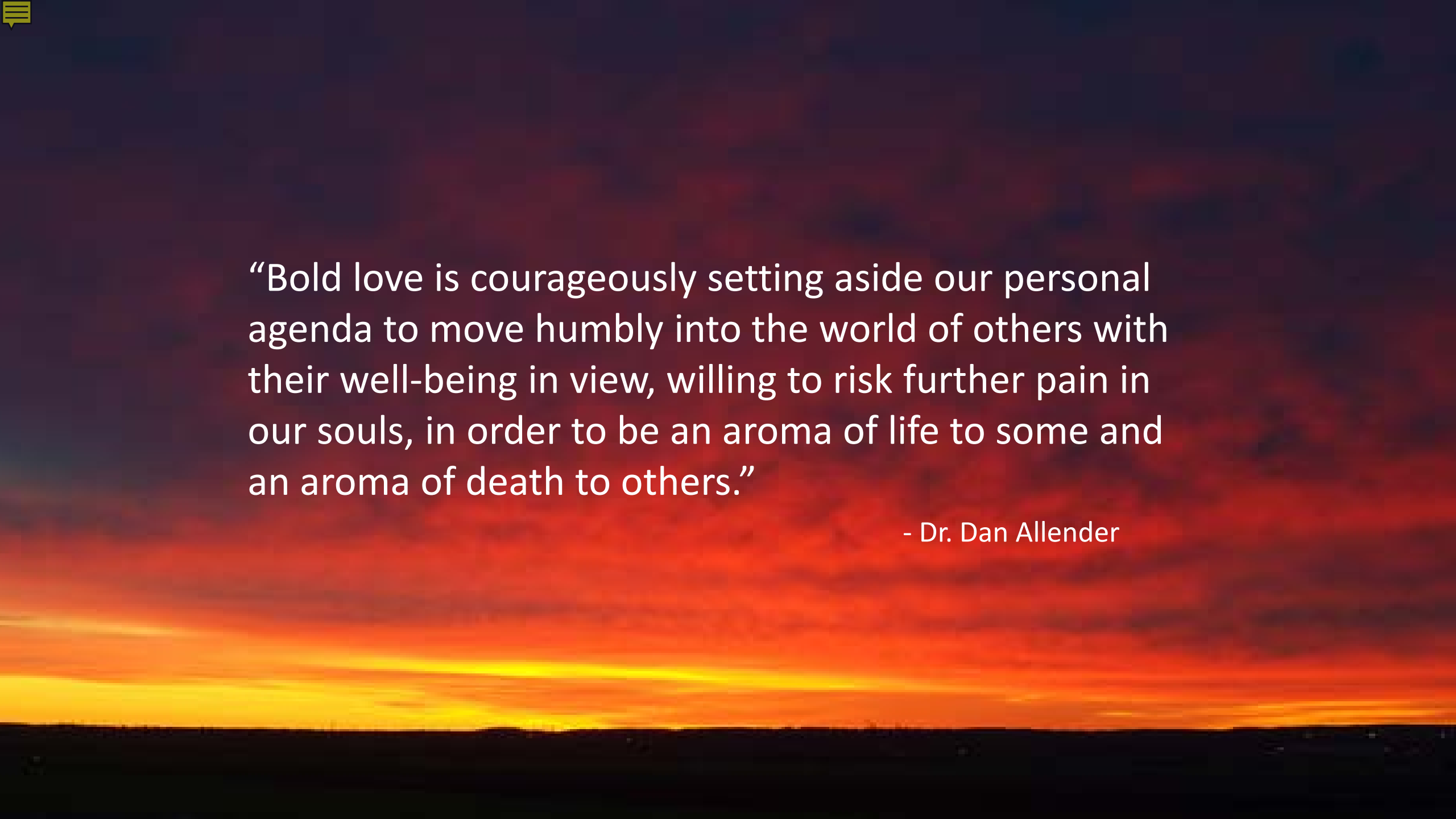
Close

Intimate



# The Stages of Personal Discovery

When you dip the bucket into the first level you come to what is called an ***acquaintance***. With time and interest, the relationship could move to a ***casual*** relationship. Then, as time passes, some casual relationships develop into ***close*** relationships. Closeness is measured by knowledge and feeling. How close do you feel to a person? How close are you? Fewer relationships move toward ***intimacy***. Intimate relationships are spousal relationships, or deep friendships (e.g. C.S. Lewis & J.R.R. Tolkien). It is not wise to pursue an intimate friendship with a member of the opposite sex unless that person is your spouse. Godly wisdom and good judgment are required when pursuing the heart of another person at any stage of relationship.



“Bold love is courageously setting aside our personal agenda to move humbly into the world of others with their well-being in view, willing to risk further pain in our souls, in order to be an aroma of life to some and an aroma of death to others.”

- Dr. Dan Allender



# Seeing People As God Sees Them



**Ken Boa**

1945 -

PhD, New York University  
DPhil, Oxford University

“Father, I confess that too often I am highly selective in the way I approach people and put up barriers against those I find unattractive. Would that I could learn to see people more as You see them, and recognize no one according to the flesh, but according to Your view of them. I might not like everyone, but You call me to love everyone with the love of Christ, a love that transcends emotions and

# Seeing People As God Sees Them

barriers and that sees each person as uniquely valued in Your eyes. May I grow in this love of the will by desiring the highest good of those I encounter every day. May I break through the stereotypes and prejudices that I have absorbed from my background and culture, and may I learn to view my love and service of others as my love and service of You.”

- Prayer by Ken Boa

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# Knowing God

- “What higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?” (J.I. Packer).
- Who has he revealed Himself to be?
- “It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself” (John Calvin, *Institutes*).
- We know ourselves as we know God, and we know God as we know ourselves.