

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

THE POWER OF WORDS: TALKING & LISTENING

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



Introduction

“In biblical terms,” noted the late R.C. Sproul, “wisdom has to do with the practical matter of learning how to live a life that is pleasing to God....The Scriptures come to us as divine self-disclosure. Here the mind of God is laid bare on many matters.” In the course of our study on the tongue, we have seen that God has “laid bare” His mind on how we are to please Him in our interpersonal interactions with others. Words are so powerful, God reveals, that the unwholesome ones must be harnessed before they ever leave our mouths and do immeasurable damage, while healthy words must be quickly released from our hearts and sent on their way for the edification and transformation of those with whom we are speaking.

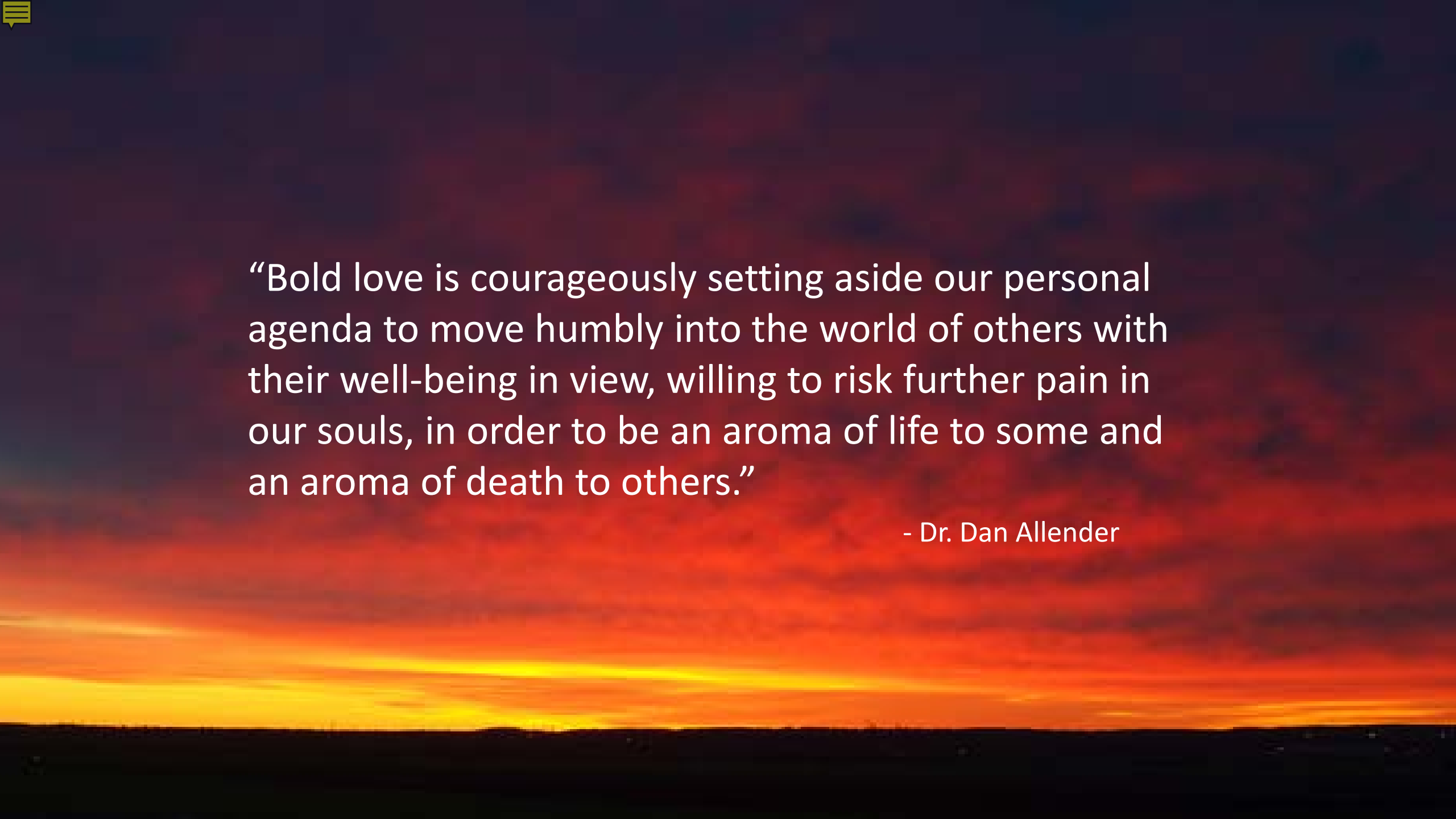
Introduction

From Scripture, we have also come to understand that there is an unfathomable vastness to the human heart (soul). Its tributaries are so far-reaching and seemingly inexhaustive that God alone is able to know us perfectly and immediately without discovery or inquiry. Yet, by His grace, He invites us to engage in self-examination in order to explore the true condition of our fallen natures. The one who lowers his bucket into his own well suddenly discovers that the prophet Jeremiah spoke truthfully: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it” (17:9). It is to be affirmed again that the only possibility of changing our speech occurs when our hearts are transformed by the gospel and filled with the Holy Spirit.



Introduction

Once we are able to see our own hearts as they really are (the correspondence theory of truth) and understand the power of the gospel (to expose and cleanse us of all sin), we are better able to become the “man of understanding” whom Solomon references in Proverbs 20:5. Under inspiration, he limits the range of qualified people who are capable of penetrating the heart of another person and identifies only the “man of understanding” as having the skills to lower the bucket into another person’s well. Eliciting the ‘deep waters’ from another is a skillful operation which only a perceptive person with power of intellectual penetration can perform. Dan Allender calls this *bold love* and challenges us to “move humbly into the world of others.”



“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

Introduction

When we come to the place where we daily repent of our self-centeredness and are willing to use our words for building up (edifying) Christ's Body, the Church, we can be assured that our hands are firmly on the bucket at the top of the well. It is an act of submission. We are at the gate of servant leadership and are preparing ourselves to represent Christ to others with His unconditional, *agape* love. This is the first step. Then, once that decision has been made, we are ready to learn how to respectfully and confidentially descend into another person's heart with powerful words that, accompanied by God's grace, meet the needs of the moment (Eph. 4:29). It is to this task which we now turn our attention today.

Solomon's Simile in Proverbs 20:5

- “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out” (ESV).
- “A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out” (NASV).
- “A person's thoughts are like water in a deep well, but someone with insight can draw them out” (Good News Translation).





Acquaintance

Casual

Close

Intimate



Review: 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.



Becoming a Man or Woman of Understanding

1. **We must have Christ-like character:** Asking the Lord to give us oneness, unity, love, and humility with others so that we will regard one another as more important than ourselves and look out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:1-4). Regarding Timothy, Paul described him to the Philippians in this way: “I have no one else of kindred spirit who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare” (Phil. 2:19). The Greek word, very rare, is a combination of *iso-* (equal) + *psyche* (soul) = “of like soul or mind” (Liddell & Scott). In other words, Paul has no one who is equal to Timothy to send to them. Self-centeredness will thwart descent into another’s well.



Becoming a Man or Woman of Understanding

- 2. We must give others the gift and assurance of confidentiality:** Far too many people do not have loyal, open, nurturing, lasting, and safe friendships. Confidentiality can easily and naturally address the loneliness and isolation of our culture by offering others a key component in which vital relationships can be formed and strengthened for a lifetime. “This discipline,” says Roberta Hestenes, “assumes that anything that is shared in the group [true for one-on-one relationships, too] will not be mentioned outside it, even to close friends or spouses...Breaking confidentiality destroys trust...Privacy must be protected.”

The Permanent Stain of Betrayal



“The disclosure of a secret is a betrayal, a violation of the person. The very process which could have been so valuable for the formation of the individual is going to block the evolution of the person if he fails because of indiscreetness. Whoever has been betrayed once, in that way, when he had given himself in complete frankness and honesty, becomes distrustful for a long time, at times for his entire life.”

Becoming a Man or Woman of Understanding

- 3. We must understand the nature of secrets and secrecy:** A secret is “something unknown or unrevealed or that is known only by initiation or revelation; some fact, affair, design, action, etc., the knowledge of which is kept to oneself or shared only with those whom it concerns or to whom it has been confided; something that cannot be divulged without violation of a command or breach of confidence” (OED). Sometimes they are referred to as *entire secrets* or *dead secrets*. In 1965, Dr. Paul Tournier published an important little 64-page book adapted from a lecture he gave in Athens, Greece in the Hall of Archeology Society on May 12, 1963. It’s title is *Secrets* and contains the following insights:

Tournier's Insights on Secrets

- “We talk to ourselves constantly; we tell ourselves all our secrets; we know all our own secrets.”
- “A certain feeling of power is always attached to the keeping of a secret” (I know something you don’t).
- “There is a reciprocal bond between secrecy and emotion. Secrecy makes things valuable.”



Tournier's Insights on Secrets



- “Every man, to feel respected as an individual, needs to feel absolutely free to say what he wishes and to keep as secret what he wishes.”
- “To intrude upon one’s private life, to violate one’s secrecy, is to violate his individuality.”
- “People who open their hearts too freely rarely bring us secrets of a liberating nature.”



Tournier's Insights on Secrets

- “Closed beings, incapable of expressing anything truly personal, are condemned to the prison of their mental solitude. Every being has need of self-expression.”
- “Naturally, everyone has his own private thermostat.”
- “Some disclosures of secrets may seem rather harmless to us when they are not at all for the person who disclosed them. There are not any big secrets and any little secrets. What gives our secrets their emotional value is the fact that they are ours and they affect us.”
- “In the formation of any person, there must be the free communication of secrets to someone else freely chosen, from which the experience of love and relationship with another develops.”

God & Our Secrets



Dr. Paul Tournier
1898-1986
Swiss Physician

“Before God, there is no secrecy, and this truth has considerable significance. The most powerful means of getting to know ourselves is to allow ourselves to be examined by God and to listen to what he has to say to us, for he knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows all our secrets.”

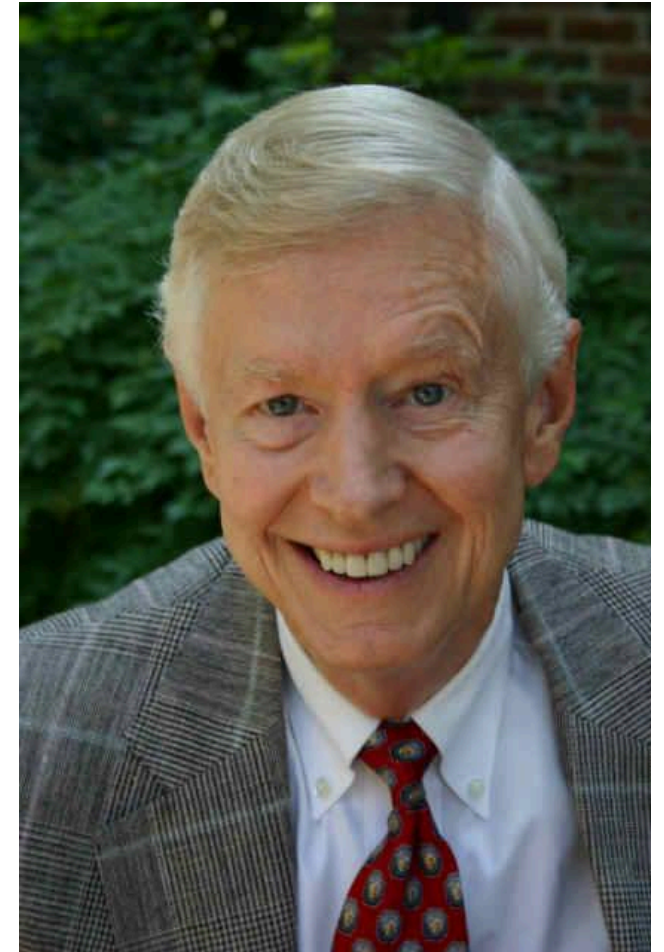


Becoming a Man or Woman of Understanding

- 4. We must attend to other's words and become good listeners:** All of us have experienced the insensitivity of another person who seems more intent on speaking than listening to what we have to say. In groups, this is especially prevalent and is easily detected by simply watching everyone competing for the floor, either by being louder or interrupting someone before they have had time to finish their thought. In his award-winning book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey advanced his now famous *Principle of Empathic Communication*: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." He asserted that "this principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication."

Who Will Listen?

“Can you name ten people who listen intently to you...people who can think your thoughts after you, empathize with you, and know what you’re trying to say before you put it all into words? Few people can name five. The great majority of people suffer the loneliness of not being able to share their true inner selves with persons who will hear them out and take time to understand” (Dr. Paul Swets).





What Do We Mean By *Attending*?

- **Attend**, v., to stretch to; *hence*, to direct the mind or observant faculties, to listen, apply oneself; to watch over, minister to, wait upon, follow, frequent; to wait for, await, expect. To turn one's ear to, listen to (OED).
- It means to be fully present to the other person, setting aside your private preoccupations and feelings, and making yourself available for the Spirit (David Benner).
- It means learning to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Hearing Yet Not Hearing

- “Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and **while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand**” (Mt. 13:13).
- “To him the doorkeeper opens; and **the sheep hear his voice**; and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out” (Jn. 10:3). “**My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me” (Jn. 10:27).



Five Listening Skills

“Good listening puts your own concerns on hold temporarily....Your goal is understanding – without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing, blaming or defending, or jumping into action (posing a solution).”

1. Attend
2. Acknowledge
3. Invite
4. Summarize
5. Ask

- Sherod Miller, Phyllis Miller, Elam Nunnally, Daniel Wackman
Couple Communication: Talking and Listening Together

David Benner's Observation

“Most people think they are good listeners. They may have learned to be reasonably attentive when others speak and assume that this is all that is involved. However, what they are often listening to is their own thoughts about what they are hearing.”



David G. Benner

1947 –

Canadian Psychologist

Four Principles for Descending into the Well

1. We must have Christ-like character.
2. We must give others the gift and assurance of confidentiality.
3. We must understand the nature of secrets.
4. We must attend to other's words and become good listeners.

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

Reflections Ministries

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