

The Power of Words

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, February 20, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or joining us via livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

This morning I want to offer a standalone sermon that I have desired to share for some time. I pray this message serves to inform and impact your walk with Christ. Thus said, I want to open our time together with the following teaching of Christ Himself...

Matthew 12:33–37 (NIV)

33 “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

NOTE 1 – It is clear from this text that the words that proceed from our mouths in life will be used by God on the day of judgment. Once again, consider the words of Christ in vs. 36–37 (Emphasis Mine): “36 . . . I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be **acquitted**, and by your words you will be **condemned**.”

NOTE 2 – Why will our words play such a pivotal role on the day of judgment? Simply stated, our words serve a revelatory purpose. That is, you can tell what a person truly believes, values and/or prioritizes by both what they DO (cf. Matt. 25:31–46) and what they SAY. This principle or precept was emphasized by Christ in v. 34b (NKJV): “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Thus...

KEY – We do well to consider what comes out of our mouths well before we stand before the Lord! Accordingly...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

NOTE 1 – I care about the words that I share.

NOTE 2 – I care about the words that you share.

NOTE 3 – I also care about matters of language and communication, likely because matters of language and communication are so essential to my role as a minister. Thus said, I want to show you something insightful that God has shown me as of late concerning words and the English language...

KEY – If you want to know what you believe, value or prioritize, consider what follows the BUT in your speech...

A PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION

Q1. Don't believe me? Would you like an example?

ILL – Have you ever said or heard someone say to you: “I know I should exercise, BUT I just can't find the time.”

Q2. What does this statement reveal?

A. For all of your talk re: the necessity of exercise, your time is devoted to items you deem more crit. or essential. Therefore, you cannot claim to truly value or prioritize exercise, calling into question your very conviction that exercise matters at all...

KEY – Once again, what comes after the BUT in the sentence reveals what you truly believe, value or prioritize...

“I know I should exercise, BUT I just can't find the time.”

SPIRITUAL APPLICATIONS PT. 1

Of course, there are spiritual applications to this principle. My goal is NOT to motivate you to exercise in this sermon. Rather, it is to provide you with some diagnostic tools to discern your underlying beliefs, values and priorities! Nearly every facet of Christian life and living can be analyzed through this simple lens. Allow me to illustrate...

FYI 1 – The Bible teaches that God is good, right? i.e., He is compassionate and generous in His dealings with us.

Q. How many would agree that the Bible teaches God is good?

FYI 2 – We could spend hours considering the many texts Scripture gives re: His goodness that we “assent” to...

Nahum 1:7 (ESV, Emphasis Mine)

7 The Lord is **good**, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

Psalms 34:8 (Emphasis Mine)

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is **good**! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

Psalms 86:5 (Emphasis Mine)

5 For you, O Lord, are **good** and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

Psalms 100:4–5 (Emphasis Mine)

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 5 For the Lord is **good**; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalms 107:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is **good**, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalms 145:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 The Lord is **good** to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.

SPIRITUAL APPLICATIONS PT. 2

KEY – However, our words often reveal that our hearts are NOT in sync with this immutable truth...

ILL – “I know that God is good, BUT I feel like He doesn’t care about what I am facing right now.”

Q1. Have you ever said something like this before? I know I have.

Q2. Have you ever heard someone say something like this before? I have.

ILL – “I know that God is good, BUT I feel like He doesn’t care about what I am facing right now.”

Q3. What do we see herein (i.e., what do we discern by listening to what comes after the BUT)?

A. We see a man or woman who is placing priority (i.e., emphasis) upon an unscriptural sentiment v. biblical truth. Is it any surprise that such a person finds it hard to believe in God and revel in His good purpose in seasons of adversity? Not at all! Furthermore...

SPIRITUAL APPLICATIONS PT. 3

KEY 1 – Though it pains me to say it, we do this in a wide array of arenas before God and amongst men...

1) Arena of Worship

“I know God has called me to worship, BUT I don’t feel like worshipping right now.”

“I know God is worthy of my worship, BUT I am too overwhelmed by my circumstances”

“I know worship with my peers matters, BUT I have to miss church today because of ABC.”

2) Arena of Prayer

“I know prayer is essential, BUT I am too tired to pray.”

“I know prayer changes things, BUT I am too busy to pray.”

“I know God hears prayer, BUT He feels so distant in this season.”

“I know I should learn how to pray, BUT I am too embarrassed to get help.”

3) Arena of Scripture

“I know the Bible is important, BUT I can’t seem to make time for it.”

“I know the Bible is truth for life and eternity, BUT it’s too hard to understand.”

“I know the Bible speaks to all generations, BUT I feel like it doesn’t apply to life in 2022.”

4) Arena of Church

“I know church matters, BUT too many people have let me down.”

“I know I should get to church regularly, BUT Sunday is my only day off.”

“I know being together w/ people matters, BUT the livestream is an ok sub.”

“I know I should bring my kids to church, BUT they have games/practice then.”

5) Arena of Fellowship/Connection

"I know I am called to be part of the body, BUT I don't seem to fit in anywhere."

"I know connection with others is important, BUT I struggle to find time to show up."

"I know God cares about unity, BUT it is too hard to forgive that one who wronged me."

6) Arena of Witnessing

"I know sharing my faith matters, BUT sometimes I just don't know what to say."

"I am not supposed to be ashamed of the Gospel, BUT I don't want others to dislike me."

"I know heaven and hell are real, BUT they genuinely feel so distant in the here-and-now."

"I know God has called me to GO, BUT they can COME and get it if they really want it"

7) Arena of Service

"I know I am called to sacrifice for others, BUT I have to prioritize myself."

"I know I am called to serve others, BUT I cannot seem to find the time."

"I know God has gifted me to serve, BUT I struggle in using my gift(s)."

8) Arena of Giving

"I know I am called to give of my time, BUT time is one thing I don't have."

"I know I am called to give of my finances, BUT I have bills and needs to pay for."

"I know I am called to give of my experiences, BUT who would listen to me anyway?"

9) Arena of Healing

"I know God is a God who heals, BUT I have never seen it."

"I know God is a God who heals, BUT the doctor said it doesn't look good."

10) Arena of Provision

"I know God has promised to supply my needs, BUT I am afraid He won't come through."

"I know God knows my needs before I even ask Him, BUT I feel like my prayers go unheard."

11) Arena of Direction

"I know God has promised to give wisdom, BUT I can't sense His leading in life and living."

"I know God still speaks to His people, BUT He is so quiet right now when I need Him most."

12) Arena of Affliction

"I know God has promised comfort in adversity, BUT the pain is overwhelming right now."

"I know God is close to the broken-hearted, BUT I do not feel/sense His presence at all now."

"I know God can work all things together for good, BUT my situation is such a mess right now."

KEY 2 – Those who speak in this fashion place emphasis on all the wrong things, reveal what they truly believe, value and prioritize, and find more alignment with the enemy of their soul than the clear teachings of Scripture.

TRANSITIONS – FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

However, what if we learned to speak more in line with the teachings of the Lord and biblical principle? What if we learned to watch our words and reverse this pattern of speech, rightly placing emphasis upon the truths of the Scripture? Practically-speaking...

Q. What if we were purposeful in what we placed after the BUT in our speech?

AFTER THE “BUT” PT. 1

Earlier we introduced this example...

ILL 1 – “I know I should exercise, BUT I just can’t find the time.”

Q1. What does it sound like if we flipped it (i.e., changing the emphasis)?

ILL 2 – “I know it is difficult to find the time, BUT I know that I should exercise.”

Q2. What transformative power is unleashed through this strategic change in emphasis?

A. This eliminates the inherent excuse and helps to set fresh resolve and purpose to effect change.

KEY – This is how overcomers and achievers think, ultimately. Much of life is inherently the battle of the mind!

AFTER THE “BUT” PT. 2

Earlier we introduced the more spiritual example...

ILL 1 – “I know that God is good, BUT I feel like He doesn’t care about what I am facing right now.”

Q1. What would it sound like if we flipped it (i.e., changing the emphasis)?

ILL 2 – “I feel like God doesn’t care about what I am facing right now, BUT I know that God is good!”

Q2. What benefit can be achieved by learning to speak in line with the Word?

KEY 1 – This shifts your focus from your circumstances (i.e., as horrific as they may be) to the Lord who is able. I would not be surprised if such an individual was marked by great faith and an indomitable, indefatigable spirit! Such is what we are called to be...

Q3. Do you want to spend your whole life whining about the wind and waves or walking upon them?

KEY 2 – Thus, our words do not just have a revelatory aspect (i.e., what you say reveals what you believe, value and prioritize). Rather, they can also have a tremendous influencing ability to both inform and impact what you believe, value and prioritize!

KEY 3 – Thus, your words—utilized well—can both manifest AND shape what is within!

AFTER THE “BUT” PT. 3

Q. What if Christians learned to speak the following (i.e., in an array of arenas)?

1) Arena of Worship

“I may not feel like worshipping right now, BUT God has called me to worship.”

“I am overwhelmed by my situation and circumstances, BUT God is worthy of my worship.”

“I am tempted to miss corporate worship today because of ABC, BUT worship with my peers matters.”

2) Arena of Prayer

“I am so tired and I don’t want to pray, BUT prayer is essential.”

“I am so busy I’m tempted not to pray, BUT prayer changes things.”

“The Lord feels so distant in this season, BUT I know God hears prayer.”

“I may be embarrassed to ask for help in prayer, BUT I need to learn to pray.”

3) Arena of Scripture

“Finding time to read the Bible can be hard, BUT studying the Bible is important.”

“Sometimes the Bible is hard to understand, BUT I know it speaks truth for life and eternity.”

“Sometimes I wonder how the Bible applies in 2002, BUT I know it speaks to any-and-all generations.”

4) Arena of Church

“Christians have let me down or hurt me, BUT church still matters.”

“Sunday may be my only day off, BUT I must get to church regularly.”

“Livestream is an ok sub, BUT it’s no replacement for being together.”

“I know my kids have games and practice, BUT they belong in church.”

5) Arena of Fellowship/Connection

“I don’t seem to fit in easily, BUT I know I am called to be part of the body.”

“I do struggle to find time to connect, BUT I know connection with others is vital.”

“It is SO hard to forgive those who have wronged me, BUT Christ calls us all to unity.”

6) Arena of Witnessing

“Sometimes I don’t know what to say, BUT I know sharing my faith matters.”

“I don’t want others to think less of me, BUT I am not ashamed of the Gospel.”

“Heaven and hell may feel distant, BUT they are real and I must preach Christ.”

7) Arena of Service

“I know I have to prioritize self, BUT God has called me to sacrifice for others.”

“I know finding time to serve is a challenge, BUT I am commanded to serve.”

“I may struggle in identifying/using my gifts, BUT He’s gifted me to serve.”

8) Arena of Giving

"It can be hard to give of my time, BUT I have been given time to give."

"I have bills and needs to pay for, BUT God has called me to give of my finances."

"I may wonder who would listen to my testimonies, BUT I am to share of my experiences"

9) Arena of Healing

"I have not personally seen a healing, BUT I believe that God is a God who heals."

"The doctor said that things don't look good for me, BUT my God is still able to heal."

10) Arena of Provision

"I may be afraid that God won't come through, BUT He has promised to supply all of my needs."

"I often feel like my prayers go unheard, BUT my God knows my needs before I even ask Him."

11) Arena of Direction

"It seems hard to sense His leading and direction, BUT God has promised to give me wisdom."

"God may seem quiet right now (in a season I need Him most), BUT God still speaks to His people."

12) Arena of Affliction

"My pain is overwhelming right now, BUT God has promised to comfort me in adversity."

"I may not sense His immediate presence right now, BUT He is close to the broken-hearted."

"My situation may be a mess right now, BUT God is able to work all things together for good."

KEY 2 – Those who speak in this fashion place emphasis on all the right things, revealing what they truly believe, value and prioritize, finding alignment with the Lord and stalling the work of the enemy! Moreover, such persons unleash the power of God, shaping their spiritual context through prophetically-charged declarations!

CONCLUSION PT. 1

Today I have shared a simple principle and provided sufficient illustration accordingly. What will you do with it?

James 1:22

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

KEY – Consider what comes after the BUT in your conversations, making strategic change as necessary. Your words serve to reveal and shape what is within you. Let us all heed the previously-shared message of J. Christ...

Matthew 12:33–37 (NIV)

33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

CONCLUSION PT. 2

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Ministry schedule...

Prayer – Sunday at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sunday at 9:15am

CYC – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm

Weekly Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women's Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men's Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – TODAY After this Service