

Voices: I have good news

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When I think about the most meaningful moments in my life, the times where my soul was stirred, most have occurred in small conversations with people I love. I would venture to say the same is true in most everyone's life.



Jack Bodenhamer It is the conversations with our parents, grandparents and other relatives early in life that build our expectations of what this world is, for better or for worse. As we grow, the voices of our friends take over the role our parental units once had—which directly correlates to the amount of trouble that occurs in these years. Somewhere along the way, mentors are found, friends become people with whom you walk through life, a spouse's voice may enliven your soul, and sage advice from your mom/dad/grandparents becomes treasured again.

Little voices speaking little truths. Such are the ways of faith and the voice of the Holy Spirit.

These conversations occur in many arenas, be it in the home, school or around a campfire.

Texas Baptist Voices

I can remember a transformational conversation in one of the more contentious lectures in college; the professor made the statement that salvation is not achieved in reading the Bible, but rather in hearing the gospel. He quoted Romans 10:14-15: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” This lecture, his voice, the immense importance of hearing the good news stuck in my head. How could my voice be one of good news?

A cultural struggle

Being a voice of good news seems to have less and less value in our culture today. We seem to have shifted to valuing boisterous, edgy provocateurs who “tell it like it is,” rather than the voice of one who speaks in humility and brings hope. We would rather be right than in right relationship. “Speaking the truth” has become code language for those who seek to encourage well-meaning church folks to treasure their own comfort and happiness, rather than provoke them to think of others more highly than themselves (Philippians 2:3).

Not that speaking the truth is not important; for certainly, such an action is integral to the life of a Christ-follower. The way in which we speak truth is important. How are we bringing good news? In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul writes, “Instead, speaking the truth *in love*, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” It would seem that speaking the truth *in love* matures the body of Christ and would be characteristic of a follower of Jesus.

However, speaking the truth *in love* is a skill that is not developed much in

modern discipleship. Good evangelism must rest upon good news and not the proofs of why I am right and you are wrong.

Kindness, a much-forgotten fruit of the spirit, must lead us. So, too, must we remember our online and social media profiles are as much under the lordship of Jesus Christ as our mouths. When one gossips and slanders on a post, it is as devilish as to speak it in real life. Speaking the truth in love, valuing kindness and being an encourager should hallmark the lives of those who would profess Jesus. Sadly, all too often, our voices are dour, cynical and self-centered.

A voice for the voiceless

I can still remember the first time I ever cussed. It was a doozy, and it was at a wake for my great-grandfather. I was in *a* lot of trouble. For a long time afterward, whenever I read the Bible and saw passages about controlling my tongue or what comes out of the mouth makes a person unclean, I reckoned it to swearing.

I've since changed my mind. I think these Scriptures speak more to the tendency of people to lack love in their words. Over and again, the Bible tells us to use our voices for good news, even when we stand to gain nothing. *The Message* translates Proverbs 31:8-9 in this way:

“Speak up for the people who have no voice,

for the rights of all the down-and-outers.

Speak out for justice!

Stand up for the poor and destitute!”

May our words ever be for those who need Christ-followers to speak up for them. May we be a voice for the voiceless. May we speak the truth in love. May we speak good news.

Jack Bodenhamer is pastor of First Baptist Church in Elm Mott, Texas.