



Spirit. Life. Linguistics.

I spent last Christmas break binge watching Netflix's *Manhunt: Unabomber* series. What a fascinating show. I had heard of the Unabomber. I remember seeing his sketch as a child, and since my mom worked for the U.S. Postal Service, we paid attention when his devastating crimes were on the news. I knew he mailed bombs and successfully remained anonymous for 17 long years, but I had never heard the story of how the FBI caught the twisted recluse.

Linguistics.

The study of human speech including the units, nature, structure, and modification of language.

FBI profiler, James Fitzgerald relentlessly studied the Unabomber's 35,000-word manifesto--the structure and nature of his words. He studied how he phrased things, how he spelled things. **And based on his language alone, the profiler was able to predict how old the bomber was, where he grew up, that he lived cut off from the rest of the world, and when he received his Ph.D.** All of that and more, just based on studying his type-written words.

Fitzgerald believed that if the manifesto were published, someone, somewhere would recognize the language and turn the Unabomber in, and he was right.

A woman read the manifesto and immediately recognized the language from letters her husband had received from his brother. Could the Unabomber be her brother-in-law whom she had never met? She turned him in as a suspect and handed over a box full of letters Ted Kaczynski had sent to her husband over many years.

After matching up words, phrases, and timelines, the FBI got their search warrant which led to Ted's arrest and a lifetime behind bars.

This was the first search warrant in history based on forensic linguistics. Kaczynski was the first man in the history of the United States convicted on language clues.

Language is very much a part of who we are. The words we say and the way we say them represent our age, our ethnicity, where we grew up, and what we know.

I used to confuse my husband when we were dating when I started talking about crayons because I pronounce them "*crowns*." He thought it was just a weird Sarah word, but the more he got to know my family, he realized we all say "*crowns*." And it doesn't end there; it seems that everyone who grew up in East Tulsa says it the same way. Josh was a South Tulsa kid, and it's easy to tell when he says "Cray-ons" all fancy like.

I'm sure you can think of specific words or phrases you say, that would be concrete enough evidence to prove you were a 90s kid, an avid C.S. Lewis reader, a west-coaster or an east-coaster.

But what about a Christ-follower? **Is your speech, your writing, the way you string words together, concrete enough evidence to prove your devotion to God and His way of doing things?**

COLOSSIANS 3:17 *And whatever you do or SAY, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

Whatever we do or SAY. **God's Word is clear: our words matter.**

If a linguistics expert were to study you, combing over the 20,000 words you say in a day, would they conclude that you were just like Jesus? Do the words that come out of your mouth or off of your fingertips represent Jesus?

Every word Jesus said was full of **truth** and **grace**. His words were **deliberate, thought through**. Full of **hope**. He was never talking just to hear Himself talk, but to **set captives free**.

Every. Moment. Red. Letter.

Everyone could tell He wasn't from around these parts. He was always talking **Kingdom**. His words were **futuristic** and **confident**, but **not prideful**. He was **honoring**--so, so honoring of His father. He spoke **love**, and he **never complained**, like ever. He was full of **wisdom** and **perfect advice**. He used his speech to **encourage**.

I could go on and on about the beautiful language of Jesus, but I think this statement from Him sums it all up.

*The words that I speak unto you, they are **spirit**, and they are **life**. John 6:63*

If everything we say is meant to represent Jesus than everything we say should be spirit and life. And because Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to flow in and through us like a mighty river, we have everything we need to represent Jesus and represent Him well!

I've noticed when I speak spirit to spirit with my kids it goes over so much better than when I speak from my flesh to theirs. **My flesh accomplishes nothing.** I can yell and be annoyed and tell them to stop being mean to each other, or I can ask the Holy Spirit to speak through me as I sit them down and purpose to represent Jesus and get to the root of the issue at hand--whether it's jealousy or someone just being tired and hungry.

When I speak life over my husband, he receives it. He soaks it up. It charges him to step right on into whatever God is calling him to do. But when I speak death the opposite happens.

Spirit and Life or Flesh and Death? **You get to choose.** You get to decide how you'll string words together. **You get to decide if you'll let your flesh lead the way in your day-to-day conversations or if you'll allow the Spirit to work through you.** You get to decide if you speak death over yourself by agreeing with the lies of the enemy or if you speak life by agreeing with the promises of God. The choice seems obvious to me, but just because it's obvious doesn't mean it's easy. It's not easy.

It's humanly impossible to represent Jesus with whatever we say or type this year, unless, we decide to let Him do the heavy lifting.

Matthew 11:29-30 *Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.*

If you'll accept this holy burden to speak spirit and life and allow Jesus to be your teacher, you can genuinely represent Him to every person you come in contact with. And that's good news because what the world needs is more of Him and less of us.

Remember, language is very much a part of who we are. The words we say and the way we say them represent our age, our ethnicity, where we grew up, and what we know.

May our language represent Jesus and everything good and perfect that He stands for. Spirit and Life, friends, Spirit and Life!



CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What part of your language do you have the **hardest time taming**? Complaining, gossip, cursing, etc.?
2. What part of your language do you think **represents Jesus the best**? Encouraging words, prophecy, truth, hope? (See the **bolded** words in last four paragraphs on page 2 for more examples)
3. If a linguistic expert were to build a profile based on your day to day language, how would they describe you? **List six words you think they might say about you** as they combed through your Facebook posts, text messages, and listened in on all your conversations for a week. **How do those words match up with the character of Jesus?**
4. What **practical steps** can you take to align your mouth with the Holy Spirit? How can you let the rivers of living water found within you, flow out of you?
5. Do you have a **prayer language**? If not, would you like one?



HIS HEART WORK

Study: Read through James chapter 3 several times in different translations and share what God is showing to you as you study. **Check out different commentaries, look up articles about James 3 on Google, soak in it, until personal revelation hits your spirit.**

Personal Revelation = When God's Word becomes clear to you in a personal way, so personal in fact, that you never forget what the Holy Spirit has revealed to you through your dedicated study of the scripture.

Act: Purpose to hold you tongue when you're tempted to use it for evil. Self control is a fruit of the spirit, if you are continuously being filled with God's Spirit, you will start to produce the fruit of self-control. **Purpose to use your tongue to speak spirit and life over the people you come into contact with in your home, work places, schools, etc.**



PRAYER NEEDS

Write down the prayer requests of your group members, and pray fervently for them! Let your group members know when you are praying for them, if you have any scriptures or encouraging words for them, etc.