

**Body Building - Part Five**  
**“Caught Loosed Lipped” – Dealing with Strife**  
*Pastor Dale Campfield - June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011*

**Intro:**

**Matt 28:19** “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

**ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve**

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

**Premise of Series:** To Build up the Body of Christ in Order to Make a Kingdom IMPACT.

**Theme Verses:** Eph. 4:11-16

**Key verse 12**

"Prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

**Question:** Why is this important?

**Answer:** Because the return of Christ is coming soon, and we, as the body of Christ, must do everything we can to make as great of an IMPACT for the Kingdom of God in the hearts of the people in the path of our life that we can. (Show our path to Discipleship here)

**Series Overview:** Here is what we will be dealing with during this series...

|                                     |                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Part 1 – “Caught by God”...         | ...Dealing with Intimacy  |
| Part 2 – “Caught Red Handed”...     | ...Dealing with Sin       |
| Part 3 – “Caught Empty Handed”...   | ...Dealing with Obedience |
| Part 4 – “Caught Giving Honor”...   | ...Dealing with Honor     |
| Part 5 – “Caught Loose Lipped”...   | ...Dealing with Strife    |
| Part 6 – “Caught without Excuse”... | ...Dealing with Confusion |
| Part 7 – “Caught Silent Lipped”...  | ...Dealing with Worship   |

Let’s continue.....

**Part 5 – “Caught Loose Lipped”...                      ...Dealing with Strife**

The children’s song goes: “Oh be careful little mouth what you say. Oh be careful little mouth what you say. For the father up above He is looking down in love, so be careful little mouth what you say.” It’s true. We cannot be caught loose lipped. With our mouths, our words, our lips – we cause strife. That’s what we’re going to look at today.

Everyone deals with strife at one time or another in their lives.  
I remember hearing this story...

**Illus:** Bride in White, Groom in Black

Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, "Why is the bride dressed in white?" "Because white is the color of happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life." The child thought about this for a moment, then said, "So why is the groom wearing black?"

## Let's take a look at the definition of Strife...

STRIFE: Confronting others, with the purpose of advancing a different viewpoint or manner of conduct, which results with - arguing, quarreling, fighting, bickering and contending.

## Let's take a look at what the Bible says about Strife...

### **GALATIANS 5:19-21**

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, STRIFE, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

### **Proverbs 17:14**

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts."

#### **The English Bible:**

"The start of fighting is like the letting out of water: so give up before it comes to blows."

## Let's take a look at a few FACTS about Strife...

- Strife is a sin and is downright ugly.
- Strife is a horrible witness to others and will destroy your reputation.
- Strife usually starts small then escalates to disaster.
- Strife will eat every healthy relationship you have alive; bringing death.
- Strife is of the devil and opens the door to all types of evil work.

## Let's take a look at what we should be doing about Strife...

### ROMANS 12:18

"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with everyone."

### MATTHEW 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

### JAMES 1:19

"let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak."

## KEY: Don't be caught loose lipped! LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN

### PROVERBS 26:20-21

**20**Without wood a fire goes out;  
without gossip a quarrel dies down.

**21**As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,  
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

The Bible also tells us that a wise man keeps his lips shut, even a fool will appear wise if he keeps his mouth shut. To become contentious is a sin, to spread the strife all around makes it worse. Don't be caught loose lipped – LISTEN!

2 Timothy 2:23 "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife." Knowing these disputes will lead to strife, we join in anyway. Isn't that something? How many times have you seen or heard someone arguing and you turn and walk towards the ones in the middle of the fuss? When you are in the middle of a disagreement, handle it with maturity. When others are having a disagreement, stay out of it, if it has no bearing on you.

Paul says not to strive about words to no profit as they will work to the ruin of the hearers. To shun profane and idle babblings, as they will lead to even more ungodliness. And the message will spread like cancer. So says God.

Proverbs 10: 12 "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins." The best antidote for anger that leads to strife, contentions and divisions is love. Not the love that the 'world' embraces, but the love that Jesus commands us to have for one another. A higher love that finds its strength in God. As true believers, we should be praying for the help of the Holy Spirit of God to show us how to cultivate this kind of love in our minds and our hearts for others.

The fear of the Lord starts from your tongue. Proverbs 13: 3 says, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life, but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."

Proverbs 21: 23 says, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles."

Proverbs 8: 21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

...

I want to talk to you about something that is very important in having peace in our relationships and dealing with the strife -- listening. Learning to listen is very important. Probably the number one complaint I hear from people about relationships is "He never listens to me." "She never understands what I say." "He doesn't value my opinion... He doesn't understand me... She never listens."

The source of many of our problems with other people in relationships is we just don't listen.

- **We spend aprox. %40 of our waking hours listening.**

You're going to spend approximately 40% of your waking hours listening the rest of your life. So it's a skill you need to learn to develop.

- **We listen at aprox. %25 efficiency.**

Most of us listen at only about 25% efficiency.

Today we're going to look at "How to Improve Your Hearing." It is a skill that you can develop. If you learn how to improve your hearing, you'll have fewer arguments, let's strife, you'll make more friends, you'll be a lot wiser, you'll be even more healthy, you'll have more peace.

**Dr. James Lynch** has proven that every time you listen your blood pressure goes down. Every time you speak your blood pressure goes up.

### **What is listening?**

#### **James 1:19**

*"Take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."*

If you are quick to listen and slow to speak you will be slow to anger. If you have a problem with anger it's because you are quick to speak and slow to listen. But if you are quick to listen and slow to speak you will be slow to anger.

**What is listening?** It's more than hearing words and sounds. It's more than waiting your turn to talk. Have you ever seen two people talking at each other? Not with, but at. I think one of the reasons bars are so popular is, not because of the drinks but, bartenders will listen to anybody. We pay them to listen to us. I read an advertisement: "I will listen to anyone talk for fifteen minutes for twenty dollars." That guy's probably making a good living, just listening. We pay people to listen to us. A friend is somebody who will listen to you when nobody else will listen.

**Why is it so important? Because it satisfies a deep need in human beings. The need to be appreciated, the need to receive attention.** We want attention. When you listen to somebody it shows that you care about them. That you mean business, that you take them seriously. It shows that you want to understand them, that you think they're important. If you care you'll be aware. Listening is loving. If you love someone you will listen to them.

So if you want to improve your relationship with your mate, kids, boss, friends at school, you've got to learn to improve your hearing. If you want to be at peace with them, you need to improve your hearing. If you want to stay out of the zone of STRIFE which is nothing but evil; you've got to improve your hearing!

### **Three hearing blocks and three hearing aids.**

### **Things that keep us from listening, from hearing.**

## I. THREE HEARING BLOCKS WHAT HINDERS OUR HEARING?

### BLOCKAGE #1. PRESUMPTION

Presumption keeps us from hearing.

#### **Proverbs 18:13**

*"He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame." The Living Bible says, "It's stupid to decide before knowing the facts."*

We get into trouble when we start assuming things. How often have you gotten into an argument because you assumed something? We do it all the time: "But I assumed you meant..." And you get into trouble because when you're assuming. You're not listening.

#### **Four wrong assumptions that are always wrong:**

- A. That there is only one way to see things.** There's not; there are many ways to see things.
- B. That everybody thinks like I do.** They don't.
- C. That people never change.** They do change and you need to give them the right to change.
- D. That I can figure out your motives.**

You can't. I can't figure out my motives half the time, much less figure out yours. So why should I presume to figure out your motives. Only God has the right to judge because only He can figure out motives.

#### **Illus:** The Mind Reader game

We play a game often in marriage I call Mind Reader. "I know what you're thinking..." No, you don't. You don't always know. And we presume upon each other. "The reason you did that is because..." The most difficult thing is to open a closed mind. Don't confuse me with the facts, I've got my mind made up! Presumption blocks hearing.

### BLOCKAGE #2. IMPATIENCE (blocks hearing)

You don't listen when you're impatient.

- Experts tell us that **the average mind can listen to about 650 words a minute.**
- But **the average person speaks about 150 words a minute.**
- That leaves, what I call, about a **500 word per minute boredom factor.**

While I'm speaking you can be thinking about your golf game because you can assimilate much faster than I can speak. I like to get to the point when I'm in a conversation with others. I don't need all the details.

**Illus:** Like the old TV show Dragnet... "Just the Facts Mam".

#### **How do you know when you're being impatient with somebody?**

**A. You interrupt.**

Have you ever heard someone talking and they're trying to figure out a word they can't think of and you've already thought of it? So you give it to them! You interrupt them. You're pushing them along because you're being impatient.

**B. You jump to conclusions.**

When you jump to conclusions you get into trouble.

**Prov. 29:20**

*"Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him."*

**Illus: People on quiz shows**

Have you seen these people on quiz shows who answer before the question is finished and they're wrong? When they give the question it was totally unrelated to their answer. Everybody knew the answer once the question was asked but they jumped to quick. We get impatient with people when they talk slow.

We get impatient and when we get impatient we jump to conclusions.

**Illus: Man, girl, dead battery, 30-34 m.p.h.**

"A man whose car had stalled because of a dead battery on a cross town expressway managed to hail a passing motorist who agreed to help him. 'Since my car has an automatic transmission,' he explains, 'You'll have to get up to 30-35 miles an hour to get me started.' The motorist nodded in agreement, smiled, and walked back to her car. After a few minutes of waiting for her to line her car up behind him, the man suddenly began to wonder where she had gone. Suddenly he spotted her in his rear view mirror bearing down on him at 30-35 miles an hour! She wasn't listening.

**Illus: Employee next to paper shredder**

A new employee of a large insurance company walked up to a paper shredder, stood before it looking confused. "Need some help?" the senior secretary asked. "Yes, how does this thing work?" "It's simple," she said as she took the thick report from her colleague and fed it into the shredder. "See?" "I see," he said, "But how many copies does it make?" Jumping to conclusions.

**Proverbs 19:11 "A man's wisdom gives him patience."**

If you're not patient with people, you're dumb. A man's wisdom gives him patient. When I want to show my wisdom, I'm patient with my kids. When I want to show my wisdom, I'm patient with employees or my wife or other people. I'm dumb when I'm impatient. Wisdom produces patience. And when you listen you're wise.

**BLOCKAGE #3. PRIDE**

Pride makes us defensive and unteachable.

**Proverbs 13:10**

*"By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well advised is wisdom."*

**Proverbs 12:15**

*"The way of a fool seems right, but a wise man listens to advice."*

You can learn from anyone if you're willing to ask questions. Most of us would rather appear smart than be smart. So we're afraid to ask questions. There's no such thing as a dumb question. The only dumb question is not to ask! People say, "I learn from experience." That's great! You ought to learn from experience, but it's wiser to learn from the experience of others. You don't have time to make all the mistakes yourself. You don't have time to do it all. Life is too short. Learn from the experiences of others.

**How do you do that? By asking questions. How do you do that? By putting down your pride and being teachable and being open.**

**Proverbs 20:5**

*"Though good advice lies deep within a counselor's heart, the wise man will draw it out."*

Everyone of you can teach me something if I just know the right question to ask. Everybody is ignorant, we're just ignorant on different subjects. We've all had different experiences. Every one of you could teach me something, if I knew how to draw it out of you. Wise people learn to listen by learning to ask questions. "*Council in the heart of men is like a deep well. A man of understanding will draw it out.*" Learn to ask questions. (There are two perfect ages: 4 and 14. At four you know all the questions; at fourteen you know all the answers.) Learning to put down your pride and ask questions is the secret of listening.

### **Proverbs 15:31**

*"If you pay attention when you are corrected, you are wise!"*

Learn from the advice of others. It's one thing to be open to ask for advice. It's another to be open to advice that wasn't asked for, when people offer their criticism. "I'm not being critical but..." Whenever people add "but" on the end they're going to slug you. You have to be open to criticism. How do you distinguish between good criticism and bad criticism? The key to learning from criticism is distinguishing between the critic and the criticism. That's very important. What we tend to do is when somebody criticizes us we tend to invalidate the criticism by looking at the source, who said it. Are they Mr. Perfect? Do they have all the sin out of their life? If you have to only be criticized by perfect people you're never going to learn from anybody because nobody's perfect. What you need to learn is to set it aside and say, "Is the criticism valid?" Not "Is the critic valid?" but "Is the criticism valid?" The fact is there's a lot of criticism that is invalid. You don't have to automatically accept what everybody says about you. That's not too smart. The Bible doesn't tell you to do that. You don't have to automatically accept every suggestion, every criticism that people make. You don't have to. But you do need to stop and at least be open and say, "Is it valid?" Don't look at the critic; they may be invalid but the criticism may be valid.

Put away your presumption and impatience and pride and you learn. It's very possible that there are many things you will only learn from your critics that you will never learn from your friends. Many times critics are doing you a service if you're open to it.

**There are four types of critics.** Maybe you married one of these.

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#### **A. The Lawyer Critic**

These people build a case, they call witnesses, they submit evidence, they're great at cross-examining and arguing. They have legal minds and you're devastated in the argument.

#### **B. The Theologian Critic**

They quote scripture for every position. They have their Bible bulldozer. "God says this." But did He really say that? A lot of verses can be taken out of context and they mean something totally different. You have to watch out. If you're married, at home, don't use the Bible as a club on each other. It's not fair! "God says this!" Who can argue with God? That's hitting below the belt. Don't use the Bible to bulldoze somebody over. If they bring something up themselves, that's fine.

#### **C. The Historian Critic**

These people never forget any of your failures. They keep them stockpiled as ammunition for future fights. One guy said, "Last night my wife got historical." Another guy said, "You mean hysterical." "No, historical. She told me everything I've ever done wrong."

#### **D. The Psychologist Critic**

They love to analyze you and your weaknesses. Their favorite phrase is "I knew you would do that." Their second favorite is condescending: "You wouldn't understand." Then why bring it up? Don't bring up something if you're going to turn around and say, "You wouldn't understand." That's not fair.

You have to learn to deal with these critics but be open. Don't let your pride keep you from listening and receiving whatever criticism that may be of importance in your life.

Those are the hearing blocks: Impatience, Pride, Presumption.

#### **I. WHAT HINDERS OUR HEARING?**

**BLOCKAGE #1. PRESUMPTION**

**BLOCKAGE #2. IMPATIENCE**

**BLOCKAGE #3. PRIDE**

Three Hearing Aids that will improve your hearing so you can have better relationships, getting rid of strife. All three of them are seen in the life of Jesus. If you use these three hearing aids, then you will have more peace in your life with the people in your life.

#### **II. THREE HEARING AIDS**

Three Hearing Aids that will improve your hearing so you can have better relationships. All three of them are seen in the life of Jesus. If you use these three hearing aids, then you will have more peace in your life with the people in your life.

#### **HEARING AID #1. Listen with your eyes.**

- Approximately 80% of all conversation is non verbal. Gestures, facial expressions, the way you look, body language.

#### **Mark 10:21**

*"Jesus looked at him [talking about the rich young ruler] and loved him."*

If you love people you'll look at them. It is a gift when you look people in the eye. It says "You have my undivided attention. You are valued. You are significant. You are worth listening to and I'm going to prove it by looking you in the eye."

#### **Illus: Find a child, bow down and look them in the eye.**

Parents, when was the last time you got down on your knees and looked at your kid, eyeball to eyeball and let them talk to you? Or got on a footstool and looked up to your kids? Some of you have teenagers that are way past you now. Looking them in the eye, not listening to them while you're reading the paper, while you're fixing dinner -- but undivided attention, looking them in the eye. It is a gift. You're saying, "You matter to me."

**For some, it's too uncomfortable, embarrassing.**

Some of you husbands and wives, it's been years since you've looked each other in the eye and really talked to each other, eyeball to eyeball. In fact, for you to do it, it would be an embarrassment to you. You're uncomfortable doing it. but it's something you need to develop. It says, "You matter... You're important."

Husbands, wives -- your mate wants your attention. If your mate doesn't get your attention in a positive way they will get your attention in a negative way. One way or the other.

Parents, your kids are starving for your attention. They want it more than money or anything else. They want your attention. If you don't give it in a positive way, they will get our attention in a negative way, I guarantee it. They will get your attention, one way or the other.

You look people in the eye, you listen with the eye. "*Jesus looked at him and loved him.*" Someone once said, "You can't fake listening." It's true. You can pretend but they know you're a million miles away. You can't fake it. Listen with your eyes.

## HEARING AID #2. Listen with your heart.

**Luke 8:18**      "*Therefore [in light of all this] consider carefully how you listen.*"

A good example of this is in **John 4:16-19** where *Jesus is with the woman at the well*. The woman is trying to get Jesus off on all kinds of doctrinal speculations: Which mountain should we worship on? Our tradition says this, your tradition says that. Jesus cuts through the whole bologna. Lady, your problem is that you have bad relationships. You've been married five times and the guy you're living with now you're not married to. The issue was that Jesus was listening with the heart. He was looking beneath all the words and listening for the hurt.

You listen for the hurt by listening with the heart. Be sympathetic. Find the pain, find the hurt. Everybody's hurting somewhere. It may be hidden but everybody's got a hurt. It may be large or little. The key to listening with the heart is to find the hurt behind the words and deal with it. Do you do that when you're listening to your mate? Do you listen with the heart to listen for the hurt?

**Illus:** Mates who hurting are looking for someone with a sympathetic ear.

Why spend an entire Sunday morning on listening? The number one cause of affairs in America, the number one cause of adultery and that marriages break up is somebody found a sympathetic ear. Most affairs do not start with sexual attraction. Most affairs start because somebody found a sympathetic ear at work that they didn't find at home. And they found somebody who would look them in the eye and listen and say, "You matter. I'll tune in" while the person at home was tuning out. Listening with the eye and the ear and the heart builds stable marriages. It's been said that a man is already half in love with a woman who will listen to him.

## Look beyond the anger.

Some of you say "I'd like to listen at home but I'm getting all this anger focused at me these days and I don't want to hear it." You need to look behind the anger. What causes the anger? All anger is caused by fear or hurt. When somebody is angry at you, don't look at them as angry but look at them and ask, "Are they afraid or are they hurting?" Hurt people hurt people. If you're being hurt by somebody it's because they're hurting. It's hard: When somebody's angry at me, I just want to get angry back. That's natural. Be defensive. But when somebody's angry at me and I see that they're just scared. "I

may lose something here. I may lose the relationship." If they're afraid then they're hurting and you look behind the pain to the hurt. If you corner an animal they're going to get angry and eventually slash back because they're afraid.

So you listen with your eyes and you listen with your heart.

### **HEARING AID #3. Listen with your time.**

**You make time to listen.** You schedule it. You put it in the program. Calendar it in your schedule.

- Experts tell us that... **The average couple in America spend 26 minutes a week in serious conversation.**
- Now days, **80% of the people both husband and wife work outside of the home.** We come home for bed and breakfast and a kiss goodnight. Nobody is really talking or listening to anybody else. Living separate lives together in the same home.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:7**

“There is a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak.”

I challenge you to mark your schedule. Date your mate. You need a weekly date with your mate where you go out and talk. Don't go to the movies. You don't talk to each other. You set there and watch somebody else do all the talking. Go to the park, out to dinner and talk and look each other in the face and say, "What's going on in your life?" I'm convinced that if we would practice this with our kids and with our mate and with the people we work with and with the people we go to school with, life would be so much easier.

Don't be caught loose lipped - LISTEN!

If you want to deal with strife, making an IMPACT for the Kingdom of God in your life – LISTEN!

And as you do.... You wait, you watch, you'll see!