**Calvary Fellowship 8.28.2022 Matthew 12:22-50 “For Argument’s Sake”**

* **About 22 yrs ago Carey & I had life changing conversation**
* We were driving around this area, praying about coming & starting CF here
* We were hungry, so we stopped at McD’s & split a #2 value meal w/ a bucket o’ fries - which is the best thing McDonald’s has ever created
* We are eating & she says, “I’m not going to eat any more fries.”
* Why? “B/c there’s a hair in the fries.” – “Move it out of the way”
* “I’m not going to eat them. U can have them - So I eat a few more
* **Then I look in the box & there is a hairball in the fries**
* I start freaking out: “Why didn’t U tell me there was a hairball?”
* “I did.” No, U said there’s a hair – Carey: “I said there’s hair in fries!”
* **Bad communication can turn a situation into a hairy one in no time**
* I spend my life communicating in different settings all week long
* So I’ve learned a few things about communicating w/ people
* And what I’ve learned is that so much conflict that people have begins w/ communication that’s taken the wrong way
* If this is true in any relationship, it’s marriage - every get into an argument, not b/c U didn’t say the right words, but the inflection was wrong?
* So she said, “It wasn’t what U said, it was how U said it!”
* **Let’s do a test & this will help us understand this idea of communication**
* **What do the words, “I have nothing to wear” mean?**
* Well, that depends on your gender - if you’re a man, “I have nothing to wear” means there’s nothing clean for him to wear
* If you’re a woman, “I have nothing to wear” means something totally different
* Woman have this ability to walk into a closet full of clothes & not see the hundreds of selection that are available to them - here’s why
* When a woman wear something new (doesn’t have to be brand new, it could be something that a friend gave her), they get this feeling of attractiveness
* But once you’ve worn something to your friend’s house or to a wedding where all of your friends were, wearing it again isn’t really a great option
* And that’s b/c wearing that outfit will not give her that same feeling she got when she wore it the 1st time or wore it to a great that had never seen it before
* When a woman says, “I have nothing to wear” she’s saying, “I have nothing that will help me feel beautiful”
* When a guy says, “I have nothing to wear”, he’s making a survival statement
* Listen, learning how to communicate & how to resolve conflict as at the heart of every healthy marriage, friendship, & working relationship function
* So we’re going to walk in on an ongoing conversation/ disagreement that’s been happening between Jesus & the Jewish religious leaders
* Their problem w/ Jesus is that He doesn’t see the law of God the same way they do -& if U don’t agree w/ them on every point, you’re their enemy
* It makes me wonder if these guys are on Twitter right now
* B/c, by the way, this is a huge problem in our culture - this belief that if U don’t agree w/ me on every point & approve of everything I do, then U hate me & we have to be mortal enemies
* By the way, this is always the sign of a weak argument - people grow when there’s an exchange of ideas
* And anyone who can’t have a conversation w/ someone they disagree w/ & instead blow up the relationship, that’s not a sign they have a strong position
* Instead, it’s a sign that they & their argument are so fragile, it can’t be tested b/c it will most likely break
* But in Jesus’ interaction w/ these religious leaders, we’re going to get great wisdom on how to deal w/ conflict & difficult people…

**———(v. 22-30)———**

**#1 - Don’t Make it Personal**

* **Follow this logic w/ me - Jesus heals a guy who is blind, mute, & demon possessed - So the guy has a lot of problems**
* **The people say, “Is this the Son of David”-that is, the Messiah**
* And the religious leaders explain it by saying Jesus is casting out demons b/c He’s in league w/ the Devil or Beelzebub
* Beelzebub is a name of 1 of the gods of the Philistines, who were the perennial enemies of Israel - in their culture, Beelzebub was the prince of demons
* Their version of Satan - which of course, just adds to the insult
* **Then Jesus gives an explanation of how that line of reasoning makes no sense - He says, “If I’m in league w/ the Devil, why would I cast him out?”**
* Then Jesus presents this amazingly logical argument & shows that the religious leaders aren’t speaking theologically, but just emotionally
* Jesus says, “Divided kingdoms don’t last. So if I am working w/ the Devil, I wouldn’t be setting people free who are under his control. But the other thing is: U have sons (disciples) who cast out demons. But U think that’s godly. So how is what I do wrong & what they do right since we’re both doing the same thing.”
* It’s perfectly logical argument that reveals this has nothing to do w/ how Jesus interprets the law - they just don’t like Jesus & are committed to opposing Him
* “Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” (Acts 19:13-16)
* 7 Jewish exorcists are streaking b/c they’ve been beat up by a demon possessed guy? I know I could make a joke, but I won’t - Someone should have warn the streakers - But they must have known their end was in sight
* **Listen, verse 25 should be memorized by every married couple - a house divided against itself cannot stand**
* So let’s explain this for a moment, b/c people think that unity means uniformity
* It doesn’t - unity means we’re different, but we agree that we’re headed in the same direction & there’s trust b/c we’re all following Jesus
* In marriage, we think unity means the wife has to agree w/ her husband b/c he’s the leader & being the leader means he’s always right
* We think it looks something like this ———Coming to America clip———
* Everyone thinks this is what they want - for everyone to agree w/ them
* But do U know that this isn’t the best way to live? Unity in a family means we trust each other & know that we’re all working towards the same goals
* “Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.” (Proverbs 31:11)
* Listen, being the leader doesn’t mean you’re always right & it doesn’t mean you’re the ultimate authority & it doesn’t mean you’re smarter
* Being the leader means you’re responsible no matter what happens
* Being the leader means U point your family to the ultimate authority - the Bible
* Being the leader means U sacrifice your desires for the sake of your family
* That’s Biblical leadership & unity comes in our homes not when everyone just blindly agrees b/c Dad is the smartest person in the room
* Instead, we present ideas & there’s discussion & conversation b/c as leaders we want to get it right & we want the people we lead to feel heard & loved
* “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3)
* B/c what Jesus said is true for every home in this room - a house divided cannot stand - it will eventually crumble

**———(v. 31-37)———**

**#2 - Some Words Can’t Be Taken Back**

* **This section opens w/ a “therefore”, which connects it to the previous section about the Pharisees attributing the work of God to Satan**
* Now, this idea shows up in a lot of preaching & truth be told, it’s presented in such a weird way - so let’s take a moment to biblically define this
* So let’s start w/ understanding the work of the Holy Spirit - what is His work?
* “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-14)
* Jesus is telling us that when the Holy Spirit is given to believers, He will lead people to Jesus b/c the Holy Spirit is always seeking to draw us close to Jesus
* But when U continually reject the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, at some point, & we don’t where that line is, but U cross it & blaspheme the Holy Spirit
* The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is is the continual rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life & eventually God confirms your decision
* We see this in Exodus - 9 times we’re told that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but the last time it say God hardened his heart & confirmed his decision
* **Now, I’ve run into people over the years who are so worried they have committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit**
* I’ve told them, “I can say w/ 100% certainty that U haven’t.” - they’ll say, “How can U be so sure?” - I say, “B/c U care if U have.”
* Someone who commits the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit doesn’t care at all
* **Then Jesus talks about how trees either produce good fruit or bad fruit - this is a theme that Jesus has already talked about & will talk about again**
* But the idea is that if U want to know what your life is made of, check out what you’re producing - 1 place to look if your words
* Why? B/c Jesus says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouths speaks
* So if U want to know what kind of fruit your life is producing, check out your words - what kind of words are they? Kind words, wise words, biting words
* Listen, if U want to transform your marriage or any relationship, virtually overnight, start using different words
* B/c people will flock to those whose heart produces words that are good fruit
* **Let me talk to the married couples int he room for a moment**
* Husbands & wives, what the voice of your parents was when U were young is what the voice of our spouse is when you’re married
* Someone can say something rude to U & blow it off, but if your spouse says something 1/2 as rude & it goes off like a nuclear bomb - why?
* B/c that’s the power that the words have of those closest to
* This is why couple don’t have unity & lack trust in their relationships - b/c they are using words that break down trust & intimacy in their marriages
* “Just as damaging as a madman shooting a deadly weapon is someone who lies to a friend and then says, ‘I was only joking.’” (Proverbs 26:18-19)
* **If U want a marriage where U deescalate conflict & are as close as possible, then use these types of words w/ each other…**
* **#1 - Speak Encouraging Words to Each Other**
* “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Prov. 12:18)
* When we’re sloppy w/ words, it causes more problems than help
* **Too many of us fail to realize the power & impact of our words**
* That’s why we are careless w/ our words many times
* I was at Home Depot a while back w/ my son Xander & I was listening to this mom talk to her son & it hurt me listening to her
* Whenever she would want to leave an aisle, she’d say, “Let’s go stupid.”
* It broke my heart b/c that kid is going to grow up & think he’s stupid
* And if someone else says that to him he won’t have the self respect to tell them to stop - all b/c some parent thinks it’s ok to talk to your kids however U want
* Listen, my wife & I talk to our kids w/ respect b/c the day someone doesn’t speak to them respectfully, I want it to feel weird for them
* If we aren’t careful, we’ll start to think things about ourselves that aren’t true
* **I was out w/ my son a couple of years ago & I was telling Xander a story & he says, “Dad, I don’t remember. U know I have a bad memory.”**
* I said, “Why would U say that?” - He said b/c I forget things - I said, “Everyone forgets things. That doesn’t mean U forget everything.”
* He kept on & I said, “Xander, If U really had a bad memory, how would U remember that U had a bad memory?” - well, that sentence stuck w/ him
* Now, Xander is our family historian b/c he remembers everything that’s every happened & can repeat it w/ total recall
* The other day he reminded me about something I said that involved giving them money - I said, “I have no recollection of that event your honor”
* He said, “Yeah Dad. Remember we were in the kitchen & U were eating a donut & U said, “U know I probably shouldn’t eat this 2nd donut, but…”
* I said, “OK. Stop. How much money do U need? But please stop recounting my questionable life choices.”
* Listen, if we’re only speaking death into our marriages, don’t be surprised when there’s no life - encourage each other w/ your words
* **#2 - Eliminate Sarcasm - no man has ever married the woman of his dreams b/c she fell in love w/ his biting sarcasm**
* However, lots of relationships end b/c of sarcastic comments that cut
* “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.” (Ephesians 4:29)
* We live in a world that is encouragement depleted - spend 5 minutes on social media & it’s mostly sarcasm, snarky comments, & outright rage
* **We all have those people in our lives - people who can turn any piece of good news into a total bummer**
* “Hey, we’re having a baby! Isn’t it exciting?” - “Well, don’t expect to sleep for the next 18 years - plus, don’t U know how much it costs to raise a child today?”
* Decided that you’re not going to be like that - Don’t be a dream killer
* Ever share an idea w/ someone & all they do is talk about why it can’t happen?
* Fred Smith, the founder of FedEx wrote the business plan for FedEx in college for an assignment & the professor gave him a C- b/c he said it was unrealistic
* The problem in this world is that there’s too many professors & not enough Fred Smith’s - commit yourself to encouraging people to take steps of faith
* There’s a million people who will tell everyone why it can’t be done - be the 1 person who tells people that w/ God nothing is impossible
* “The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.” (Proverbs 10:21)
* **#3 - Be Generous with your Words - Some people withhold compliments & encouragement - don’t be that person**
* Instead, go out of your way to be generous w/ your words
* “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” (Proverbs 27:5)
* Tell the people U love that U love them - if you’re proud of someone, tell them
* Speak words of life to the people U love - in fact, I want to challenge U to
* **I had a conversation w/ my pizza delivery guy who was dropping off my family’s dinner & I asked him to step in while I paid him**
* He said, “U have a lovely home & a beautiful family.” - I could have just said, “Thank you”, but I decided to speak words of life to him
* I said, “20 years ago I was a struggling student delivering food to pay for my education & God changed my life. Here’s what I know: if U walk w/ God & trust Him, He’ll do in your life what He’s done in mine.”
* It was amazing - I said those words to him & he immediately stopped slouching & stood straight up - why? B/c someone spoke a word of blessing to him
* And then he said, “Are U the Pastor of Calvary?” - I said, “Yes I am. Here let me add a little extra to that tip.”
* We’re going to talk about this more when we get to chapter 15, but suffice it to say for now, whatever is in your heart is coming out in your words
* So if U want better words, change what you’re allowing into your heart

**———(v. 38-42)———**

**#3 - Having Peace Takes Humility**

* **This is an amazing response by Jesus b/c He says an evil generation seeks a sign & the only 1 you’re going to get is the 1 U don’t like**
* The sign of the prophet Jonah is that he was in the belly of the fish for 3 days
* Now, some people have a problem w/ this & I always say that I believe it happened for 2 reasons: #1 - there are several accounts of this happening
* It’s happened a couple of times in the last 3 years
* But #2, Jesus believed it happened & when U rise form the dead, I’m going w/ whatever U say
* But Jesus brings this up for a couple of reasons - first, b/c He says this will be what happens to Him - He’ll be buried for 3 days
* 2nd, b/c the men of Nineveh repented at Jonah’s preaching
* Now, if U know Jonah’s story, U know He didn’t want to go & the other thing is, Jonah was very upset when the people repented - he wants them destroyed
* And if we’re being honest, it’s not the best sermon you’ve ever heard
* “Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.’The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.” (Jonah 3:4-5)
* I read this sermon I think, “Really? That sermon moved people
* So about 6 years ago Xander & I remodeled his room & my mom came over to see it - He was about 7 at the time
* We took 1 wall & turned it into shelving so he could house all of his Lego sets
* Legos is all my son has collected for the last 3 years - so that’s all he owns
* But here’s the problem - he wants to play w/ Legos like they’re action figures
* But U can’t b/c they fall apart - so I introduced Gorilla Glue into the mix
* So whenever he gets a new Lego set, we glue it & even if he drops it, it’s fine & most importantly, I don’t have to rebuild it
* But here’s what happens a lot of times - I’ll be gluing a set & he just disappears & plays & then comes back once an hour to check on me
* But when I’m about to pack it up & finish the set the next day, he’ll say, “Come on Dad. Let’s keep building. We can do it.” - I say, “What’s this ‘we’ I keep hearing about. It’s me building. You’re nowhere to be found.”
* So he says, “OK. I’ll stay w/ U.” - So we’ll build together for a bit & then he’ll say, “I’m going to check on Mia. I’ll be right back.” - And he’s gone for an hour
* Now, Xander still loves Legos & he’s been building them by himself for a while
* Well, 7 year old is showing showing my mom his room - my mom walks in & says, “Wow Xander, these are the most Legos I’ve ever seen.”
* He says, “Yeah, I build them myself.” - I was in the hallway & I said, “Excuse me?” - He says, “Sorry. Yeah my dad helps sometimes.”
* **This is exactly what’s happening w/ Jonah - I’m a preacher, so I can critique his sermon & my assessment is that this is a bad sermon**
* It’s 1 sentence - there’s no hope, love, forgiveness or opportunity - just judgment - “I hope U guys like the smoking section b/c you’re all going to hell”
* And yet everyone hears this message & responds - why?
* Make no mistake - Jonah is not building Legos by himself
* **What would cause the Ninevites to hear this message & repent?**
* There a couple of things that are important to note: there were 2 plagues to hit this area & wiped out 1,000’s of people
* There was also a total solar eclipse which was a bad omen in that culture
* On top of that, some tribes from the north had banded together & they were gaining steam
* In less than 100 years, those tribes will become the Babylonian empire & will wipe out the Assyrians & conquer the known world that time
* And lastly, the Assyrians worshipped Dagon, the fish god - so when they hear the story of Jonah being vomited out of the fish - that was a big deal to them
* Jesus is doing the same thing - He’s fulfilling Messianic prophecies & the religious leaders won’t believe in Him
* And Jesus says, “The men of Nineveh will be the ones to judge U b/c they got 1 sentence & they believed. You’re seeing miracles & U won’t believe.”
* **The last thing Jesus mentions is the Queen of the South or the Queen of Sheba that’s mentioned in 1 Kings 10**
* This is a ruler who traveled over 1,200 miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon & it changed her life
* Jesus is saying, “She came from the ads of the earth b/c she heard a rumor about the wisdom of Solomon, but you’re seeing the miracles & hearing my teaching & U still won’t believe.”
* **So what does this have to do w/ conflict? The thing keeping the religious leaders from experiencing peace was pride**
* Sometimes we act proud b/c we fear that humility will make s appear weak
* So we do everything to appear strong & as though we have it together
* This is pride at its core - pride wants to make everything in your life about self
* Here’s the reality most of us don’t want to hear - no 1 is thinking about us that much - we’re freaking about what people will think
* Here’s what people will think: not very much - they’ll move on very quickly
* **When I was in college I was a delivery guy at night so I could go to school during the day - 1 kid was amazed by my sense of direction**
* He wanted to be a delivery guy too, but this guy could get lost in his living room - so he asked me for help
* So I grabbed him by the shoulders, turned his body & pointed him north & I said, “This is north. Let’s start here.”
* Then his eyes opened wide & he said, “OK. I get it. So everywhere I look is north.” I said, “No. U are not the center of the universe.”
* **That’s what pride does - it causes us to think that we’re the center of the universe - that everything revolves around us**
* Pride is different than most sins b/c U can tell if you’re doing most sins
* No 1 is surprised to find they are committing adultery - no 1 jumps out of bed & says, “Hey, you’re not my wife!”
* No 1 is surprised to find they’ve stolen $ - “The money must have fallen out of your account & into mine.”
* **But pride is different - it’s impossible to detect w/o God’s help**
* Pride makes U a fool b/c the proud person can’t learn from their mistakes
* Simply b/c they can’t admit they’ve even made a mistake
* That’s why prideful people always make poor choices
* They they have to justify those decisions rather than admit they were wrong & learn so they don’t repeat the same mistakes again
* And this is why there’s conflict - b/c there’s not enough humility to admit we’re wrong - and God loves us too much to keep us there
* That’s why He invited us to follow Him - to humble ourselves & learn from Him b/c when we take the position of a learner, it’s possible to change
* B/c Jesus said that He has come to give us abundant life - that is, life that’s overflowing w/ joy - not a perfect life that’s problem-free
* But a life that’s characterized by joy even in the midst of challenges
* And for some of us, our 1st step is to come to Him or maybe come back to Him…