

# “Speaking from the Heart”

## Lesson Two: An Awesome Accent

Dalraida Church of Christ, Summer 2025

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👉 “Just say, ‘Shibboleth.’ But he said, ‘Sibboleth,’ for he was not prepared to pronounce it correctly” (Judges 12:6).

### Language Accents

One of the most interesting aspects of speech is “accents.” In every language there are many 👉 sub-sections that identify geographical boundaries. The words used carry their 👉 unique meaning; even the pronunciation of the same word is peculiar; the geographical accent identification is undeniable. Note how the word “sod” communicates two totally different concepts in British English and American English.

This interesting cultural phenomenon is highlighted in 👉 Judges 12:6. Inspiration refers to language identification. This historic event has become a metaphor in our contemporary society. In contemporary society, “sibboleths” manifest in various forms including dialects, accents, jargon within specific communities or professions. These “sibboleths” define who belongs to a group and who does not. For example, specific phrases can exclude some while reinforcing in-group identity among members.

Wartime passwords utilize this biblical principle.

- 👉 A well-known sign/countersign used by the Allied forces on D-Day during World War II was the challenge/sign was “flash”, the password “thunder” and the countersign (to challenge the person giving the first codeword) “Welcome.” Some countersigns include words that are difficult for an enemy to pronounce. The word “thunder” contains a voiceless dental fricative (/θ/), which does not exist in German.
- 👉 Some American soldiers in the Pacific theater in World War II used the word *lollapalooza* as a sibboleth to challenge unidentified persons. Because Japanese people would often pronounce both letters L and R as rolled Rs.

👉 Those who travel are aware of this. It is experienced by those who 👉 relocate to a different area in our nation. This is 👉 educational, interesting, and at times irritating! In Indiana there are no “potluck dinners” but “pitch-ins.” For the outsider a “potluck dinner” is an unknown thing.

Such speech accents 👉 identified Peter, even though he vigorously denied it. “(T)he way you talk gives you away” (Matthew 26:73). Most of us have been 👉 confronted by one asking, “Where are you from? Your accent is different.”

👉 This aspect of speech introduces a very practical question...

### The Accents of the Christian’s Speech

An interesting point is to consider how the term “accent” is 👉 used in the decorative-arts meaning of “something that emphasizes or highlights” the attractiveness of an object. There are those gifted with the ability to take a 👉 mundane object and add accents so that it is transformed into an amazing result. The attractiveness of something is highlighted by the accents added. The 👉 value of the common is skillfully accentuated and magnified.

This frames a significant fact for the Christian who “out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good” (Luke 6:45). 👉 Christians are to accentuate the gospel (see 1 Timothy 2:9; Titus 2:10, “so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” The word “adorn” is from the Greek “κοσμέω” meaning “to put in order” and from which our term “cosmetics” is derived!) and one of the critical ways to do this is by “speaking from the heart.”

👉 The inescapable obligation—the Christian must speak with an accent instantly distinguishing him from the world and accentuating the attractiveness of the Church/Redemption/Salvation! 👉 “We speak...to please God, who examines our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

**A Christian’s Accent is...**

What accent 🗣️ identifies Christians? This is a very intriguing query. Some may find it 🗣️ offensive. There are different answers depending on the one asked.

One answer is that there is a 🗣️ unique “Christian” vocabulary that many have learned and are instantly offended when that vocabulary is not spoken. Such includes: We don’t “join the Church”; preachers are not “pastors”; we do not “tithe”; etc. When someone fails to use the right vocabulary words then irritation is voiced and at times voiced in a degrading, disrespectful manner. We must be careful using this accent!

The critical query asks: 🗣️ “What does God expect our communication accent to be?”

### The Body Language Accent

We communicate with body language (gestures; facial expressions; posture; etc.). This principle of non-verbal communication also 🗣️ applies to our congregational life. The Church is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18) and we 🗣️ must speak the appropriate “body language.”

🗣️ What is the distinctive “body language” characterizing the congregation? And, most critical for this study, 🗣️ HOW am I involved in communicating body language in this congregation that will glorify God and respect His commands?

We, as members, 🗣️ are obligated to make sure the accent of our congregational language is acceptable to God. Our congregational “body language” must reflect loyalty and commitment to God. Psalm 19:14, “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

🗣️ If we are speaking “out of the good treasure of (our) hearts (we will) brings forth what is good” (Luke 6:45). We will not cower because of intimidation. We will not be silent because of timidity.

2 Timothy 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”

🗣️ Peter says Christ’s disciples are “peculiar” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV). They are different from non-Christians. They have 🗣️ values and lifestyles that are considered “strange” and “out of fashion” (1 Peter 4:4, “they are surprised that you do not run with them in the same excesses of debauchery”).

Christians accent their speech because they are a people that are possessed by God—they 🗣️ belong to God (1 Peter 2:9). Consequently, their 🗣️ lives and speech are very different from those in the world.

In contrast with the world’s standards of speech and behavior, our Lord said “*it is not this way among you*” (Mark 10:43). The Christian must have a radically distinctive accent than those in a pagan society disrespecting God.

- 🗣️ The world does not set the Christian’s behavior patterns (Romans 12:2, “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”).
- 🗣️ The world does not shape the Christian’s point of view (2 Corinthians 5:16, “Therefore from now on we recognize no one by the flesh”).
- 🗣️ The worldly person does not get a pass from the devout Christian (Ephesians 5:11, “Do not participate in the useless deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret”).

🗣️ God’s message is clear—the Christian’s accent distinguishes him as different from the world around us!

### The Source of the Accent

🗣️ “You talk funny. Where are you from?” All accents have a source. Some accents can be feigned or modified. “Why you do not have an accent at all!”

🗣️ The Christian’s accent comes from God and not the world. God is the source of the Christian’s action and belief.

Every morning the man would pause in front of the watchmaker’s shop, gaze at the large clock in the window, set his watch and walk on. Every day at noon, the watchmaker would go to that big clock and set it precisely

by the blowing of the noon whistle at the local factory. After many years had passed, the watchmaker stopped the man one day and complimented him on his faithful commitment to the correct time. “Oh, I have to be correct,” said the man. “You see, I’m the one responsible for blowing the noon whistle at the factory.”

We must be very careful that 🕊 the standard for our actions is God’s Truth (the Bible). We cannot use the people around us as the standard for our accent in body language.

- 🕊 Where do we look for the absolutes in daily living?
- 🕊 Where do we find boundaries for values that distinguish...right from wrong, essentials from disposables; the primary from the trivial; the important from the urgent?

🕊 When we look to God and His Word, instead of societal mores, we will find our way past moral relativism to godly courage. And we will speak with boldness! We need to join Paul in his request for special prayer: “(P)ray in my behalf, that speech may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness...that...I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:19-20).

The accent of the Christian’s speech that is spiritually healthy, ethically godly, communicating true spiritual truth is found only in Christ’s Words (Hebrews 12:2).

- 🕊 God has given us the teaching standard for healthy speech accents (Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Colossians 3:8-12).
- 🕊 God has given us the living standard for healthy speech accents in the life of Christ.

🕊 Christians must cultivate their distinctive accent. They must be identified by speaking wholesome words, encouraging words, thankful words, and words boldly speaking God’s truth. This is the “body language” distinctive and which identifies as being “all members of one body” (Ephesians 4:25).

### The Beginning of the Accent

🕊 “I love the southern accent and wish I talked like that!” 🕊 Some accents are not genuine. They mimic but are not true. Some have been trained to speak with a specific accent, but it is not true—it is all theatrics! Sadly, 🕊 some professing to be Christians speak the vocabulary but it is all theatrics! Insincerity. A pretense to deceive.

The wonderful news is that the accent of one speaking from the heart is 🕊 available to “whosoever will come” to the Lord! Becoming a Christian enables you to speak with this accent. (Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father”).

There will be 🕊 a thorough change as one changes citizenship from the world to the Church. (Colossians 1:13, “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”).

This change is amazing. A Frenchman became a British citizen. He was asked, “What does your new citizenship mean to you?” He replied, “It means that I woke up one morning having lost the Battle of Waterloo and I went to bed that night having won it!”

One is recreated, born again, and transferred when obeying the gospel. As a consequence, he has a new language; a new native tongue; a new vocabulary; an accent that reflects the speech pattern of the Son of God!

🕊 Speaking from the heart means that we will sound like Jesus Christ—we will speak contemporary English with a committed Christian accent!

### The Accent of Unclean Lips

🕊 Isaiah 6:5, “Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.”

When Isaiah stood before God it was his 🕊 SPEECH that was his most painful awareness. The impurity of his speech exposed the impurity of his heart (Luke 6:45). This is a sobering realization. 🕊 Many are “good” Christians, but they will share Isaiah’s woe.

- We often ignore HOW we speak to others.

- We turn speech into weapons of savage destruction and justified such.
- We have given little thought to how our speech will come back to haunt us as we stand before God (Matthew 12:36-37, "But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words, you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.")

☞ Before we can speak with the accent of Christ, we must begin by confessing to God that our lips are unclean! And, believe it or not, there are some who think they have no need to make this confession! And their lips remain unclean and they will appear trembling before God but it will be too late to change their eternity.

The careless speaker has been compared with a careless surgeon. Little forethought or preparation he uses unsterile instruments, cutting roughly, and no concern for the damage that will be done. We have all wielded a careless scalpel: harsh words, hasty words, proud words, dishonest words, words that erect barriers, destroy bridges, words that fuel anger, crush spirits and alienate relationships. (Proverbs 12:18, "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.")

### The Power to Change

The power that changed Isaiah's unclean lips is ☞ available to mankind. It is the "incomparably great power" of our Almighty God (Ephesians 1:19-20, "(W)hat is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places").

☞ "Woe is me!" is changed too rejoicing and "your guilt is taken away" (Isaiah 6:7). It is the grace of God that provides forgiveness for the penitent heart. And the forgiven is ready to go out with a NEW speech pattern and NEW vocabulary and share the good news of God's grace and mercy!

1 John 1:7-9, "(I)f we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

### The Accent Change Brings "NEW"

☞ You have NEW relationships. Sin, especially unclean lips, builds divisive barriers. But obedience destroys those barriers (Ephesians 2:14). Christians are catalysts of change to God's patterns. Christians are to lead the way in bridge-building and barrier-busters. Christians are to lead the way in rebuilding relationships. (2 Corinthians 5:19-20, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.")

☞ You have a NEW point of view. You speak to others according to how you see them. If you see them respectfully, or judgmentally you will talk to them that way. So, some ask, "Why do you always talk to me with anger?"

- The Christian will see those who obey God from a new point of view (2 Corinthians 5:16, "(W)e recognize no one by the flesh).
- The Christian, speaking from the heart, will speak with concern, compassion, dignity, respect but also directing with the Bible (John 8).

☞ You have a NEW community. Our word "communicate" is derived from the same Latin word from which we get "communion" and "community." Such suggests that God intends our conversations to be a shared expression of how we are connected to each other. The Christian's communication is to CONNECT and not divide. This is possible only if we follow God's Word (1 Corinthians 1:10, "you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment"). The body language of this new community...

- ☞ Is not the catechism and use of certain religious words and expressions

- 🕊 Is more than a "Hallelujah," "Amen" or "Praise the Lord."
- 🕊 Is not pious clichés (1 John 2:4, 9, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him...The one who says that he is in the Light and yet hates his brother or sister is in the darkness until now"; 4:20, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and yet he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen").
- 🕊 Is not measured in the quantity of religious words but in the Christ-like accent of our words.
- 🕊 Is active communication of our devotion to God in casual conversation, doctrinal discussion, in admonition and counsel. It is "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) that is the true accent of our speech.

### **The Accent Challenge**

🕊 Changing speech habits is perhaps the most difficult challenge the Christian will face. Some try to evade their responsibility. "I can't help it! I've always been like this and if people cannot accept me then it's their tuff luck! They can like it or lump it!"

🕊 Old speech patterns cannot be changed by mortal methods. BUT the power of God can change the heart and as they speak from the heart, all around them will be amazed at the transformation that has occurred. (Acts 4:13, "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.")

🕊 This challenge cannot be forced. It has to be a personal choice—"your words."

🕊 In the beginning God created man and woman to communicate powerfully, lovingly, and constructively. In Christ, God gives the recreated man and woman the option to choose to communicate with the tone, body language and vocabulary that brings a blessing and not a barrier!

🕊 In the following lessons we will examine specific ways that the new creation in Christ speaks from the heart with the accent of Christ!