

Summer Road Trip - Conversations

We're in the middle of a sermon series called Summer Road Trip. The last couple of weeks we looked at planning your trip and checking your bags. And once you get to that point, you're usually going to hit the road.

While you are on your trip, whether it's a long drive, or a flight (or waiting for a flight), you have a lot of down time...a lot of time where you are stuck in a seat...and this leads to a lot of opportunities for conversation.

This may have been part of your planning, maybe you planned to have your earbuds in the entire time listening to music, a podcast, or audiobook. Maybe you planned to read an actual book...but the thing is, you don't know what opportunities will arise.

What things will happen? What might someone else say to you or ask you? What will you see?

Then most importantly...what will you say? How will you respond?

Last time we got on an airplane, we had the 4 of us and there were 3 seats on each side of the plane. So my family being introverted didn't really want to sit on the side by themselves, next to a stranger. I volunteered as tribute. I fully intended to give the guy next to me a "sup nod" and then put in the earbuds and listen to this book I started reading at home...

I had a plan. But so did God. I hadn't bothered to ask about His plan...because I liked mine. Mine was solid, it was easy, it was lazy, it was VACATION!

So what actually happened? I never got my earbuds out of my bag. Me and my new friend Al talked the entire 3.5 hour flight. He was around my age and had lived in Effingham and Vandalia. He was a believer and a police officer in St. Louis (really difficult job right now).

Looking back I don't even know how it started. But I know how it ended...with 2 men encouraged and a 3.5 hour flight seemed like 30 minutes.

Proverbs 25:11 (CSB)

A word spoken at the right time
is like gold apples in silver settings.

We both got what we needed at the right time. I was able to encourage a struggling police officer who was having a hard time with his job and his future. He was able to help get my mind back on track with eternity...looking for opportunities to serve God even while on vacation.

This led me back to road trip conversations and how they parallel our faith journey.

Everything we do in life as a believer...it has to be with eternity in mind. Every interaction with another person (someone we know or don't know) is an opportunity to impact their life. It's just whether we lead them closer to Jesus or push them further away.

Proverbs 18:21 (CSB)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

We have great power...in the spoken word!

So what do we do with that power? I think the easy answer is to speak life.

This verse tells us that we will have what we say. Speak life...eat life. Speak death...eat death.

It would seem that speaking life should be our only option. But I believe sometimes we should actually speak death. So hang in here for a bit...

Speak life.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (CSB)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

This follows the 10 commandments. Moses tells them that the purpose of it all is to love God with everything that you have....His Word has to be in your heart...

Then you repeat it to your kids...not using the Word as a weapon...you know you've done it ("the bible says honor your parents, if you want to live a long life!")

Repeat God's word so they will know it!

Talk about it...where? At home and on the road. This means the Word of God should shape your conversations no matter where you are.

Talk about it... when? When you lie down and when you get up! All day long. It should be the first thing on your mind and the last.

God's Word is LIFE...It should shape your conversations along your journey!

Let me give you the first tip to a life giving conversation:

DO MORE LISTENING THAN TALKING

I know what you're thinking, God's Word is life...you gotta speak it. True, but it starts with love...genuine care and affection, desire for their good...

You need to understand who you are talking to by discovering their interests and needs...then speaking with grace and care in a way that our words are thoughtful and interesting (different)

If you want to blow someone's mind...ask questions about THEIR LIFE.

I think there are times where we have the right intentions, we want to give advice or encouragement, but we are doing it based on assumptions and partial information. Let them tell you what they need!

What if you still don't know what to say???

Colossians 4:6 (CSB)

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

Here's the key....speak with grace. A lot of times our tendency is to judge from our point of view without really hearing or understanding theirs.

Have you ever been traveling and someone says "wow, look at that?" and you look around and from your perspective, there's nothing really that interesting? It could be that you drove past it, or it could be that your view is blocked (other side of the car).

Life is like that a lot of times, where we can't see what someone else does...and so we should speak with grace...kindness, love, concern...Paul says "seasoned with salt".

Salt is a preservative...it keeps things from spoiling until a later time...sometimes we just have to speak in a way that doesn't spoil the entire conversation. I sometimes find myself trying to say something impactful when I might just need to say something preserving...

Something to keep the conversation going, keep the door of communication open!

That means we don't ALWAYS speak what's on our mind. Sometimes we are too salty...we need to be seasoned with salt but not to the point of being salty.

Salt changes the flavor of whatever it's added to...are you going to enhance the conversation, or are you going to be a little too much and ruin it?

If you learn to speak with grace...then you will know how to answer each person. A little salt brings conversation to life!

Ephesians 4:29 (CSB)

No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.

Foul language refers to something that is rotten like spoiled fruit or meat...so we can preserve conversation with a little salt...or we can ruin it with rotten meat!

We should speak what builds people up! We don't want your rotten meat at the potluck man!

This is where the old saying "if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all" comes in!

It's not about just being able to say you brought something. If what you brought is rotten, we'd rather you come empty handed!

Hebrews 10:24-25 (CSB)

And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, 25 not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Church the day is approaching...and the people of God need to be encouraging one another and provoking love and good works....

Because there is a lot of work to be done! There are people who need to know the love of God. They need to know that there is a Savior and His name is Jesus...who is coming back for His bride...the church!

But we'll never get there if we stick to our plan to just get on the plane or sit in the back seat with our earbuds in. We've got to engage people. We need those unexpected talks...sometimes with unexpected people.

Start with love, with grace, with salt...

Sometimes you have to talk about something meaningless to get to something meaningful...it's called a segway, it's building trust, it's taking walls down one brick at a time.

On a road trip sometimes your conversation just begins with what you see around you.

Can I tell you that the things you see are sometimes the most important things in your life?

What I see I can believe. And what I believe is what I talk about.

Deuteronomy 4:9 (CSB)

“Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don’t forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.

Church, talk about your faith journey...what is God doing in your life...what have you seen?

What do you believe? If you believe that Jesus is Lord...then ANYTHING you speak that stems from that will give life.

When we speak about Jesus, we speak life...because He is the way, the truth and the life.

Speak Life!

But what about speaking death? We have that power too. And we use it when we put someone or something down. When we discourage instead of encourage. When we crush someone’s heart instead of lifting it up.

But there are times where speaking death is good. It’s when someone has a wrong view of Jesus or themselves. We can use the power of the tongue to declare the goodness of God and death to strongholds and wrong thoughts.

We can speak death to the enemy and his influence. Death to our insecurities. Because of the life available to us in Christ Jesus!

And as we elevate His name...and we speak of His goodness...His word says He will draw people to Him and it will lead them to repentance! A change of heart...change of life...change of destiny...It leads to death...death of self but life in Jesus!

This is why baptism is so important...it’s that declaration of a changed life that’s been given to Christ!

Church we have a responsibility to talk. To converse. To build that trust. To tear down those walls brick by brick. To speak life and death.

We don’t gather to just feel good...we gather to get equipped to do the work of the God we worship, who gave it all for us. We have a world that is dying...and it’s time the body of Christ started conversing with that world...

We have the key to eternity!

And there are plenty of vacancies!

Let’s fill up heaven!