



# *Sacred Speech*

## A Practical Guide for Keeping Spirit in Your Speech



### Discussion Guide

#### CHAPTER 1: TO BE HUMBLE

1. Humility is reaching toward another, even when he/she is being unfair. How difficult is it to be humble in speech?
2. What are some ways to avoid self-justifying?
3. Think of an instance where you have seen the expression of humility in someone's speech or behavior. What reaction did you have?
4. How can we let go of our very human need to be right all of the time in our speech? What do we gain from being right? What do we lose?

#### CHAPTER 2: TO FORGIVE

1. Sacred speech gets to the words of forgiveness as quickly as it can after something bad happens. How can we move toward forgiving someone who has hurt us? What is a good "first step"? A good "second step"?
2. When we are angry, hurt, or confused, we can use the simple godly tool of asking a question: "Could you tell me more?" Are there occasions in your conversations when this response would create more understanding and less hurt?

#### CHAPTER 3: TO PRAISE

1. Praising the world as it is, while praising the world for what it will become requires faith in God's goodness. How could this kind of praise and hope infuse more Spirit in your speech?
2. What is your favorite "language" of praise? Do you sing? Dance? Preach?

#### CHAPTER 4: TO PRAY

1. The sacred words of prayer don't "make" God appear; they take us to the God who is already there. How does prayer reach out to Spirit? Describe a time when you were surprised to realize that God was there all along, even though you hadn't called.
2. What are the risks we take in praying openly in public? How are these risks holy?

3. What special considerations surround interfaith or multifaith prayer? What are the special challenges of sacred speech in interfaith or multifaith situations?

#### CHAPTER 5: TO JUDGE

1. Sacred speech learns to speak the truth in love. How can judgment be sacred speech? What are some of the words that you've found to be healing and holy?
2. Think of an instance where trouble happened and people said, "Why didn't anybody say anything sooner?" How could taking the risk of sacred speech have changed the outcome?

#### CHAPTER 6: TO LAMENT

1. When we lament we trust God enough to show how forsaken or distressed we feel, and we show our desire for God's help. How can we let Spirit help us to express the pain that feels inexpressible?
2. How can sacred speech liberate us to heal?
3. Lament can be used sacredly in personal, spiritual, and political areas of life. What can be achieved through specifically directed laments and their necessary hope for reconciliation?

#### CHAPTER 7: TO LOVE

1. Love allows us to use sacred speech to tell each other who we really are, to let another person see us as we see ourselves. In what ways do you use sacred speech in your family? In your friendships?
2. Is it possible/practical/proper to practice the sacred speech of love at work? How?
3. How can we express our love as "unconditional"? How can we show it in our speech?

#### CHAPTER 8: BEYOND THE POLITICALLY CORRECT

1. What is the difference between being correct and being truthful?
2. Can you remember instances where someone's insistence on being "politically correct" resulted in shutting down all conversation?
3. Reaching toward others is a way of moving beyond politically correct speech to sacred speech. How do you show other people that you are open, approachable?

#### CHAPTER 9: THE SACREDNESS OF ORDINARY, PLAIN SPEECH

1. Inner clarity leads to sacred speech. Exercise: To learn how to speak plainly, ask yourself these questions about a particular issue:
  - What do I want?
  - Where are my boundaries?
  - What is enough for me?
  - What does God want of me and from me?

Rephrase your answers into simple, ordinary statements—into sacred speech.

CHAPTER 10: THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE

1. Silence can be sacred in itself. When have you found solace in being quiet? What's the difference in the quality of holy silence when you are alone and when you are in the company of others?
2. Do you ever use silence to prepare yourself for sacred speech?
3. Knowing whether to speak or not to speak takes wisdom. What signals you to keep sacred silence in a particular situation?

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