

# EMBERS FROM MY FIRE

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Written by Pastor Ken Damon  
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## CONVERTED CONVERSATION

One of the greatest potentials for good in the Church today is learning to apply New Testament standards for conversation to daily life. The urgency for giving concentrated effort to developing these skills should be obvious. Families and communities are desperate for examples of respectful and effective speech. Society needs leaders who have the dignity and discipline to build bridges of understanding.

Poor listening skills, disrespectful demands, labeling, gossip, angry outbursts, and insults are commonplace even among those who claim to be Christians. The harm done in families, churches, and communities is incalculable. It is about time for all who claim to follow Jesus to be challenged to get serious about learning the necessary skills to practice something so central to the faith.

For those who long to live a new life through Christ "converted conversation" may be the single most important topic to be taught and developed. If converted conversation is to become a top goal in our lives and in the local church we need to be reminded of the forceful and clear words of the Bible on this issue.

"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. (James 1:26)

In other words, disrespectful speech negates our Christian profession. All of the Bible reading, good works, and prayers are worthless if we are careless in how we talk to and about others who are made in the image of God.

The Apostle Paul says, "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:3) He goes on to describe the two core characteristics of love, "Love is patient, love is kind." (1 Corinthians 13:4a)

If our lives are to count for Jesus we must learn to be patient and kind in all our communication. It is not an option to be lackadaisical. "Let your conversation be always full of grace..." (Colossians 4:6a) Graciousness is not a painless ability to develop. For many of us we will need to pray daily, and absorb Scriptures that encourage converted conversation. We will need on-going training and persistent practice.

Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:22b) How we talk is extremely serious business to God! Is it to you?

Peter Scazzero, in his excellent book "The Emotionally Healthy Church," lists four rights of respect to which every person is entitled: 1. The right to be different (1 Corinthians 11:19, Romans 14:1); 2. The right to be taken seriously (James 2:1, Romans 12:10b); 3. The right to be heard (James 1:19); 4. The right to disagree. ("The Emotionally Healthy Church," Zondervan Publishing, 2003. p. 149)

It cracks me up when I hear TV commentators say the words, "I respectfully disagree" and then promptly crush their opponent through rapid-fire sweeping statements, domination of the conversation, high volume, witty insults, labeling, and an attacking tone. Just because someone says the word "respectful" does not magically make their tactics civil. Our society at large is not doing a very good job at communicating. This gives Christians a superb opportunity to lead the way. The Bible has given us superlative principles for effective dialogue. It's time to develop into skilled peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9)

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) Christians are called to bring the world to Christ through extraordinary examples of relationships of respect and kindness. I don't believe Jesus was talking about a mere sugar-coated syrupy appearance of harmony. He meant a love where we are willing to lay down our lives for one another. This does not mean withholding our opinions but that we are wise enough to listen first. This will require a Holy Spirit empowered, Bible inspired, converted conversation.

*Pastor Ken*

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### **Shroyer Road Baptist Church**

508 Shroyer Road, Dayton OH 45419

Phone: (937) 298-9531

[Web Site: SRBCLife.org](http://SRBCLife.org)

10:30 AM SUNDAY SERVICE --- 9:30 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

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