


A WAY WITH
WORDS

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Discussion
Guide

Discussion guide: A WAY WITH WORDS

by Daniel Darling

For individual or group use

INTRODUCTION

- 1 How have humans been created *imago dei*, “in the image of God”? Give as many examples as possible.
- 2 Discuss how humans specifically reflect God as communicating beings. How is our communication similar to God’s and different from God’s?
- 3 How are “death and life . . . in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21 ESV)?
- 4 On a scale of one to five (one being quite pleasant and five being hateful), how would you rate your overall experience of communication on the Internet and social media platforms? How would you rate your personal behavior online, using the same scale?

CHAPTER 1

- 1 What is the downside to having the Internet—and all its information—at our fingertips all the time?
- 2 How do you relate to the author’s words: “When I’m connected to my phone, I often feel I don’t need God because I feel like a god. When I’m disconnected from my phone, I know I need God, because I feel like a creature. I recognize that I’m human, completely dependent on Him”? What’s your relationship like with your phone (or laptop or tablet)?
- 3 What are some practical steps you can take to fight the temptation to be “all-knowing”?

CHAPTER 2

- 1 Define *confirmation bias*. When have you seen this play out on social media?
- 2 How can you balance the instinct to stand up for justice with fighting the temptation to join a social media pile-on because of confirmation bias?
- 3 Discuss the importance of James 1:19 (“Everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”) in the way we conduct ourselves online. How are being slow to speak and being just related?

CHAPTER 3

- 1 Why is discernment not optional for believers?
- 2 How should we do online discernment well?
- 3 What is the difference between genuine biblical discernment and the “tabloid” style blogs that thrive on finding flaws in public Christians?

CHAPTER 4

- 1 How do you think of your friends and followers on your social media accounts? Describe how reaction to your online activity (likes, shares) pulls you toward an unhealthy desire for fame.
- 2 How can your preaching, writing, or teaching become opportunities to serve rather than to be served?
- 3 (For pastors, teachers, and leaders:) How do Paul’s instructions to Timothy and Titus cause you to consider more carefully your demeanor and the way you use your words, especially online? (See 1 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 1:6-9.)
- 4 Should leaders be on social media? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 5

- 1 How have you experienced the pressure to have a “grammable” life?
- 2 Why do you think Christians tend to pursue “fame” through social media?
- 3 Discuss the connection between popularity on social media (getting likes and comments on posts) and the genuine human longing to be known and loved, seen and heard.
- 4 How do we practice the reality that God knows, loves, sees, and hears us, even when we are tempted to find that acceptance on our social media feeds?

CHAPTER 6

- 1 Discuss the dangers of “digital heroism” and Pharisaical activism. How have you seen these issues play out on social media?
 - 2 How do we obey the Bible’s command to love justice in a digital age? How can we use our influence to mobilize while also avoiding a works-based righteousness?
 - 3 How do you respond to this thought from the author: “Sometimes the best form of activism is silence and communion with God”?
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CHAPTER 7

- 1 How do you regard conspiracy theories? Are you a believer or a skeptic? Explain.
- 2 The author cites three factors in our current culture that are giving new life to conspiracy theories: “the weakening of our key institutions, the democratization of information, and a lack of trust in the media.” How have you experienced these three factors in your online activity? Do you agree they contribute to the spread of conspiracy theories? Why or why not?
- 3 What should Christians do with bad ideas, conspiracy theories, and false information?
- 4 What does it look like to cultivate humility, seek wisdom, and embrace truth as digital users?

CHAPTER 8

- 1 How is true civility a sign of strength?
- 2 What is the relationship between incivility and refuting the personhood of those with whom we disagree?
- 3 How should we apply Romans 12:18 to our interactions with others—both online and in real life?

CHAPTER 9

- 1 How has technology benefited the way you worship God? How has it distracted you from worshipping God?
- 2 Discuss the importance of the local church in a Christian’s life.
- 3 Describe your experience of your local church being closed during the COVID-19 quarantine. What did you think of worshipping mainly through digital platforms? Should “Internet church” be a replacement for in-person worship? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 10

- 1 How can you make the Internet a better place?
 - 2 What would it mean if you regarded the Internet as a tool to be used, not an idol to be served?
 - 3 How can you use your platform to elevate other’s voices?
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