

## How does God speak through me?

Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) was the first major philosopher of the Christian era. His ideas had a profound effect not only during his lifetime but also on the development of the medieval church. He is recognized as a saint and a Doctor of the Church for his contribution to theology.

Among his many contributions regarding the Christian life, he wrote: “A Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps.” Think about this for a moment. Our words can and should be spoken in the love of Christ. But how well do our words reflect God’s love?

How often do you really listen to what you say? Do you ever stop in mid-sentence and correct yourself? Have you ever caught yourself about to say something ... then stopped? Why?

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Jesus said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*” {Matthew 5:9} Do your words bring comfort or irritate people? St. Peter emphasized this same point when he wrote, “*In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense [to speak] to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.*” {1 Peter 3:15–16a}

Okay, I understand that I should be a reflection of God to others but sometimes the words are out of my mouth before I realize I am talking. It’s just the way I’m wired. I can’t really do anything about it! Can I? Jesus says there is a way to tame the tongue. “*Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.*” {Matthew 7:7} Have you been asking for the grace to tame your tongue?

So how do we go about becoming “a voice through which Christ speaks”? St. James told us, “*You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak.*” {James 1:19}

Here’s one acronym that may help us share God’s love when we speak: **WAIT**. There are two ways to use this acronym. First, **W**hat **A**m **I** **T**hinking? Give yourself time to pause, say a prayer, and think about what you are about to say before speaking. If not you are likely to violate one of the book of Proverbs truisms that says, “*Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool [someone who stubbornly refuses to listen to the counsel of wisdom] than for him.*” {Proverbs 29:20}

Second, **W**hy **A**m **I** **T**alking? Are you sure you need to be talking or should you be reflecting on what was just said? If you feel it necessary to use words, first try to paraphrase what the other person said to be sure you fully understand where they are coming from. Maybe all they need is to have their feelings validated, no advice, or sharing how you’ve been through similar things. Just listen.

One final acronym that may help on our journey to be a better “voice through which Christ speaks” is to focus on Jesus. It is **WWJD**. **W**hat **W**ould **J**esus **D**o or in terms of this talk ... **WWJS** ... **W**hat **W**ould **J**esus **S**ay. Learn from Jesus. Remember, we are “*children of God.*”

**Reflective Questions:**

1. How well do you feel your words reflect God's love when you speak?

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2. What might you do to be a better "voice through which Christ speaks"?

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3. Have you ever felt injured by what someone else has spoken? \_\_\_\_\_

How did it feel? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you wish they had done to correct the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Is there someone who may have felt injured by words you've spoken? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what do you think God would ask you to do today to heal that relationship?

(Be specific) \_\_\_\_\_

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It is not enough to say we are Christians. We must live the faith, not only with our words, but with our actions.