Fall is one of my favorite times of the year. The cooler weather is definitely welcome in South Louisiana, but I love the crunch of leaves on the ground. I love opening the windows and watching college football on Saturdays. I love not having to paint my toenails all the time. The changing colors of the trees and all the jackets and the smell of campfires. I love it all.

My family always embraced the fall and spent time camping. And not, not the boogee cabin and camper camping. No. The rough and tough tent camping, sleeping on the ground, walking up the hill in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. Over-Analyzing every noise we heard at night. Sitting beside the water with hot chocolate and a great book. Staying up late playing card games on picnic tables.

Oh how would love for fall to be here all year long.

Oh how I wish it would hurry up when the Louisiana humidity suffocates.

But the seasons are not abrupt. They are considerate and gracious.

And they take their time.

We are an impatient people. And we are becoming more and more impatient as the years go by.

Fast food can’t come fast enough. High speed internet can’t be fast enough. Our season of life can’t change fast enough.

We don’t know how to slow down, to wait.

We don’t know how to allow something room to breathe.

To come in softly.

And here is the thing.

This can get us into a lot of trouble in relationships.

A friend says something offensive to us, and we feel the urge to jump in and offend back.

Our child yells at us in anger, and we are tempted to yell back.

Our boss points out an area of growth, and we defend ourselves quickly.

Our spouse takes a dig, and we immediately criticize back.

We have lost the art of taking our time to respond in a gracious way. Our desire to speak our truth and stand up for ourselves has gotten out of balance, and we have become the very people that we dislike. The abrupt, abrasive, and rude people who have hurt us so many times.

This impatience is only keeping us in conflict. It is doing nothing beneficial for us. And in fact, it is causing pain to others, too. We can all take a deep breath and admit right now that we have been quick to respond.

Quick to respond to someone with an opposing political view online.

Quick to jump in with our opinion.

Quick to make our voices heard.

And though I stand with you and believe that your voice matters, too, there is great wisdom in choosing to be slow to speak, slow to become angry, and quick to listen as it says in James 1:19. At times, it may be necessary to be silent and go on your way. A grocery clerk is rude to you, and everything in you wants to be rude back. That’s a smile, remain silent, and go on your way situation. That person means nothing to you. It is not worth the conversation. A person cuts you off in traffic, and you want to speed up to cut them off, too. Another situation where it is not worth it. Just let them go.

But many situations need your voice.

Because without it, change may never happen.

I love how James does not tell us to simply be quiet, passive by-standers.

He wants us to respond when necessary, but the response needs to be slow and thoughtful.

Like the beginning of fall.

So how do we practice this discipline?

1. Take a deep breath.

I recently heard a great interview with Jennifer Garner on the Raising Good Humans podcast. She and the interviewer were talking about the power of a teaching their kids how to take at least one full, deep breath before speaking or responding to another. One full breath. In to 4, out to 6. They mentioned how many arguments deescalated that way. Try it with me now. Anytime you feel the urge to defend, yell, say something mean, or speak your mind, take at least one deep breath. Even better if you can take 30 seconds of deep breaths.

2. Think before you speak.

Such a cliche, but super important. Think about what you need to say and how you can say it in a way that is not unkind. Picture the desired outcome of the conversation, and ask if these words you are about to say will help you reach that outcome. And I love the silly acronym THINK for this. Before you speak, THINK, is it Thoughtful (T), Helpful (H), Inspiring (I), Necessary (N), or Kind (K). Now my friend, hear me. I am NOT telling you to allow people to walk all over you. I am not telling you to remain silent when others are abusing you, neglecting you, or mistreating you. But fighting words may not always be helpful. So it is good to consider how to be assertive and stand up for yourself with a sense of calm and wisdom.

3. Speak slowly.

When you do speak, practice speaking slowly. When people speak slowly instead of at such a hurried pace, others can understand them much better. Emotions can flood us, and it is very difficult to maintain control while speaking in this state. Those deep breaths help with this. I recently read an article that analyzed Dr. Daniel Amen’s TED talk. The author says that Dr. Amen says just over 1700 words in a fifteen minute TED talk, and how that is a fairly slow speaking rhythm. However, that approach was effective and aided in helping the audience remember the content better.

I know you feel like you just have to say something and you have to say it now like you want the seasons to hurry up and get here already. I know what this feels like. Almost like our lovely presidential debate a couple of weeks ago. So much interrupting. So little patience.

But there is little wisdom in hurry.

Wisdom is found in slowing down, being thoughtful, and then saying the things that need to be said.

This is not an excuse for the timid to remain silent. It is more of an encouragement to speak if anything, but to speak with intention.

I met one of my dearest friends in the world in the first few weeks of college. His name is Landon, and I remember immediately feeling safe with him. He became like a brother to me. I always tried to figure out why that was. What was it about him? The more I thought about it, the more it was clear to me. He is quiet. He feels safe because he is quiet. In large groups, he did not say much. But when he did, people listened. And when it was just he and I, he listened more than he spoke. And when he did speak, it was thoughtful. He was perfectly comfortable with silence. If there were no words needed in a moment, he did not use them. But when words were needed, he said them in a confident, assertive way without tearing me down. His presence was calming. I never felt like I had to be on the defensive with him, and I always felt greatly respected by him. The outward quiet reflected the inner quiet of his soul. Goodness, if there were more Landons in the world.

When we can be slow to speak, others feel safe with us, too. We can be assertive while remembering that to counter attack is not a great conversation strategy. To be impatient and quick to speak is to be unwise.

May we be the wise ones.

May our words be thoughtful and intentional.

May we be comfortable with allowing time to slow, to progress as it needs to, just as the seasons come and go.

Let me read Proverbs 18:4 to you to end our time today: “A person’s words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook.”

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that \_\_\_being slow to speak\_\_will help you make one more step toward wholeness so that you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

No one does relationships perfectly. If you struggle with biting, aggressive words, you are not alone. And there is no need to feel shame. This practice is to simply lead you to better ways.

And if you are on the timid side, the person who struggles to say anything at all, I would love to help you say hard things with confidence. Let’s work together! You can find out more about my coaching services at www.kerrahfabacher.com/book-online

You can find me on instagram @kerrah fabacher or at my website, [www.kerrahfabacher.com](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com).

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And a big thanks to my friend, Robert Hargrove, for creating the music for our podcast, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson for editing the show.

Until next time, friend.

I’ll see you soon!