Some people talk too much. They enjoy hearing their own voice so much that they are always blabbing about something. It is easy to grow weary of those who talk too much. Even God does. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Being what is sometimes referred to as a "loud mouth" is not a good quality to have and is certainly not a characteristic of a Christian.

There is, however, a time to speak. Solomon, writing about the appropriate time to do certain things, wrote, "To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7). Talking too much is a problem; but not speaking when it is necessary is a problem too, and, is usually a sign of indifference or timidity. We have a few Bible examples of men not speaking when they should.

It appears that Timothy was at times timid and reluctant to speak as he should. Paul admonished him with the following words: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:6-8). Why would Paul encourage Timothy not to be ashamed of the Testimony of the Lord if he was not hesitant at times in preaching the gospel? This is a Biblical case of inappropriate silence.

Let's look at another case. In Genesis 3 we have record of the first sin. Satan deceived Eve in the garden. The question is was Eve alone when she was being tempted of the Devil? Most have concluded that Eve was alone with the serpent and after she sinned she went and told Adam about it. The truth is I'm not sure when Adam arrived on the scene, but the text indicated that he was with Eve when she took of the tree and ate the forbidden fruit. Verse six says, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband WITH HER; and he did eat." (Emphasis mine, DW.) That sounds pretty clear to me. Adam was with Eve when she took of the tree and ate. Was he with her during the whole scene recorded in Genesis 3? Again, I don't know, but he definitely was with her when she plucked a piece of fruit off the tree and ate. Why didn't he say anything to her? Why didn't he warn her of the consequence of her sin? Why did he not try to persuade her in any way? We really don't know. We do know, however, that his silence was inappropriate.
There is a time to speak and a time to be silent. I'm afraid that too many times brethren speak when they shouldn't, and are quiet when they should speak up. Both of these things can cause trouble and are equally wrong, but I'm concerned in this article about brethren not speaking when they should. Here are some examples.

**When a brother in Christ sins, we should not keep silent.** No one benefits when we are inappropriately quiet in the face of sin. The brother who sins has lost his fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). If he doesn't repent of his sin, he will be eternally lost in a real place called hell. Should we really ignore that fact just because we do not want to offend the one who has sinned? In whose interest would that be? If your brother or sister in Christ sins, there may not be a lot you can do about it; but there is one thing you can do - speak up! Warn him of the error of his way. You might just save a soul (James 5:19-20). And even if the person doesn't listen to you, you have saved yourself from accountability (Ezekiel 3:17-21). Don't be guilty of being silent inappropriately. There is a time to speak. Paul knew this to be true. When Peter sinned by withdrawing himself from the Gentiles, Paul confronted him (Galatians 2:11-21). Paul didn't write Peter a letter. Paul didn't give Peter a message through a friend. Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Paul wasn't afraid to speak. What will we do in similar circumstances.

**When a false doctrine is taught, we should not keep silent.** We are living in strange times today. Brethren have concluded that silence is always better than confrontation. A man can stand behind a pulpit and teach things that are clearly wrong and nothing will be said. That's wrong. I do not advocate writing a preacher off just because we do not agree with what he has preached or even when he misinterprets a passage and teaches error. We all make mistakes. However, the answer is not silence either. If I teach error, my soul stands in jeopardy before God. I have the responsibility, along with every other preacher of God's Word, to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). If I stray from that doctrine, whether I do it purposely or accidentally, my relationship with God is affected. The last thing I want, then, is for you to keep silent if you think I have taught error. My pride may be hurt a little when you confront me, but in the end, I will be grateful.

What ever happened to the kind of courage possessed by Aquila and Priscilla? When the mighty preacher Apollos fell short in his preaching, these two valiant soldiers of Christ refused to keep silent (Acts 18:24-28). We need more of that today. I know it is not always easy, but we must fight the urge to be passive and inappropriately silent, and do what we know God wants us to do. Strange doctrines are being preached today on unity in diversity, Romans 14, marriage, divorce and remarriage, etc. Sadly, often times no one is willing to speak out against the error being taught. That's inappropriate silence. Paul said we must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them (Ephesians 5:11). When we do not do that, all the more souls are lost. If you are not willing to speak out against error, at the very least, hold up the hands of those who have the courage to do so. Isn't it strange that when some speak out against error today, they are the ones treated like a heretic rather than the false teacher? Hard to figure, don't you think?

**When in the company of those who are lost, we should not keep silent.** Evangelism is lacking in many local churches today. Let me ask a question: If a local church refuses to support institutions, does not participate in a social gospel by building gymnasiums, fellowship halls, or kitchens, and limits its work to that which is authorized in the scriptures; yet is inactive in the area of personal evangelism, is that a sound church? There are many reasons why local churches are not
growing today (at least not many of them). Right at the top of the list, though, is the fact that many Christians are just too busy to reach out to the community in which they live with the gospel. If we believe in the gospel, we must preach the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:13). When it comes to saving souls, do not be inappropriately silent.

When the faith is attacked, we should not keep silent. As Christians, we are admonished by Jude to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). What do you do when someone begins to emphasize a false belief? When someone says that we can join the church of our choice or worship God with musical instruments, what do you do? Do you take the opportunity to ask him for a home Bible study? Do you try to reveal some truth to that person? Or do you just sit there and remain quiet, thinking there is no need to start a fuss? To say or do nothing in those circumstances is certainly inappropriate. Remember, there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. I pray that we learn to distinguish between those times.