



## Accidental Broadcasting

*(F)or there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed;  
and hid, that shall not be known.*

*-- Matthew 10:26b*

We did a major remodeling on our house. One of the Hideous Things That Had to Go was a brown plastic intercom. It looked like a spaceship console from a cheesy 1950s sci fi movie.

The new intercom system had a nice, white, modern-looking master console for the wall next to my computer in the kitchen. It came with several replacement speakers for around the house. They all hooked up to the doorbell. Ooh! So now, when people came to the door, we could decide whether to let them in, or keep pretending we weren't home. Perfect! The wiring was already in place, so installation would be a snap, the salesman said.

But when the intercom workmen arrived, *¡arriba!* All they could speak was Spanish.

They smiled broadly and nodded their heads with enthusiasm. But as they tried to hook up the wires, I saw them peering into closets, frowning, and arguing in rat-a-tat Spanish. Then when I'd walk by to check their progress, they'd smile broadly and nod their heads as if everything was dandy.

*¡Tacomargarita el grandemegusto arriba!* they said when the job was done. They smiled broadly and nodded their heads, handed me a thick manual, and vamoosed it, *¡undule!*

Well, the thing never worked right. Deafening static would erupt from a speaker in the middle of the night. We had to shout into it so loud to be heard, we could just as well holler across the house. The doorbell worked for a while, then died, too.

Other guys from the company came out a couple of times and tried to fix it, but it soon regressed.

I resigned myself to intercom-less living. At least the radio played. But eventually, that died, too. I grimaced every time I cast eyes on that useless box that I had picked out with such high hopes.

Then one day, it totally fritzed out. The little LED sign kept switching from "listen" mode to "talk," with bursts of loud static:

"LIST!"

"TALK!"

(static, static, static, static)

"LIST!"

"TALK!"

(static, static)

I turned every switch off. But it still did it. There was nothing to unplug. It was horribly distracting. I had a writing deadline to meet, and couldn't stand the noise. So I did the only thing I could, given my vast engineering expertise:

*I leaned a heavy ceramic flower pot up against the button, and duct-taped it tight.*

Eureka! Blissful silence! That fixed YOUR wagon, you worthless slab of plastic.

Then I proceeded to forget all about it. Over the summer, the kitchen was the scene of many, many conversations. With a man and wife, three young-adult children, a 5-year-old, a juvenile delinquent Labrador, the main house telephone, and various comings and goings of a large supporting cast of visitors, that kitchen was Verbal Central.

Not all of the talk within those walls was happy, peppy, positive, wholesome and uplifting. But I never thought a thing of it.

One evening, though, Maddy and the dog, Sunny, were cavorting in the kitchen. Maddy was singing, "Sun Bun! Doodly doodly! Oh, yeah! Oh, yeahhhh!" and other fascinating lyrics. I slipped outside to get the newspaper from the driveway.

And what do you think was blaring out all across the front yard?

"SUN BUN! DOODLY DOODLY! OH, YEAH! OH, YEAHHHH!!!!"

Whaaaa?

I gazed stupidly at the doorbell's long-forgotten outdoor intercom speaker. After several seconds, my pea brain perceived a truth:

ALL SUMMER LONG EVERY WORD THAT HAD BEEN SPOKEN IN THAT KITCHEN HAD BEEN BROADCAST TO THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD!!!!

What did I THINK would happen, taping that heavy pot to the button so that the LED read "TALK" at all times?!?

Doodly doodly! Oh, yeahhhhhhh. . . .

I cringed at what I might have said that might have been overheard. The gossip! The harsh rebukes! The . . . questionable word choices?!?

I was so, so busted.

Is THAT why my neighbors smiled kind of funny lately? Every heated discussion, every judgmental remark, every bit of salty language, everything we said to each other in what we THOUGHT was total privacy, had gone out there for the world to hear.

Who needs TV soap operas and sensational reality shows? Let's stand outside the Williamses' and get an earful of outrageous juiciness!

Noooooooooo!!!!

Then I waxed philosophical. Maybe this was a God thing, to make us clean up our verbal act. If we conducted ALL our conversations as if the whole world were eavesdropping ALL the time, we would watch what we said. We could get a lot more stars, and a lot fewer frowny faces, on our "charts" in heaven.

I smiled. Thank You, Lord. Lesson learned.

Then . . . how many SECONDS do you think it took me to rip that duct tape off that flower pot, yank it away, and stop that accidental broadcasting?!?

*¡Vamos! ¡Undule!*

*¡Tacomargaritaelgrandemegustoarriba!*

Doodly doodly! Oh, yeahhhhhhh!!! †