

## The power of words

Thank you so much for helping me. I love you. Girl, you are fine. I am so proud of you. You're important to me. I don't know how I would live without you. You are wearing that dress. Will you marry me? We are having a baby.

I hate you. You're just like your father. You will never amount to anything. I wish I were dead. You make me sick. I want a divorce. Just leave me alone.

Words have power, don't they? So, we must be careful both what we choose to say and what we choose to hear. Since we know degraded speech diminishes us and others, we must work hard not to engage in it and not to allow anger or even truth be the permission or excuse to say something that causes pain to someone else.

This is particularly important because we live in a word-saturated, word-celebrating and word-wary culture. In the book of Genesis, in the pages of the creation account, God speaks the world into existence. So, it seems that words have the potential to form worlds. Words are indeed powerful.

Words can build up or destroy, hurt, or heal, join or sever, placate or incite. In nursery school we learned the playground rhyme "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." There's not an ounce of truth in that.

This week I spoke hurtful words and this week I received hurtful words. Well, every week I receive hurtful words, but some weeks are worse than others. Although I apologized, I realize that there are some things that simply cannot be returned like a missed opportunity or a shot arrow, our words cannot be returned once they are released.

Careers and marriages and friendships can be ruined when those arrows are shot. People can be driven to illness or suicide when they face the reality that the loss of their reputations can never be compensated. The Book of Proverbs sums it all up, I think without much exaggeration: "Life and death are in the power of the tongue."

I am incessantly criticized for my transparency, but I view amongst other things this blog as a type of catharsis. As I experience both the good and not so good in this life, I know it can only help self and others that I share the learning. So, here are three considerations regarding our words.

- 1. My words should reveal what I truly desire.** Starting today what we desire for others and ourselves and what we think about them should be communicated by what comes out of our mouth. Even when this means a failure to satisfy. But remember if you don't want it then don't speak it.
- 2. My words should provide the direction for where I am going.** Our words can build people up or they can absolutely tear them to shreds. With one word of hope or encouragement we can speak truth into a person's heart calling them back to life so they might reach their full potential. If you want joy or peace or hope directed in your life then speak that and not negativity, criticism, or cynicism.
- 3. My words should often delight the hearer.** People should want to hear you speak because your words are helpful, hopeful, inspiring, life giving and encouraging. This doesn't mean I have to be full of compliments, but it does mean I must speak in a way that leaves the hearer with a sense of dignity, empowerment and self-confidence.

What is coming out of your mouth? How would the people who know you best describe the words that come from your mouth? Our words reveal our hearts, and we cannot avoid what's true of our hearts. There is no masquerading or hiding from our words. They really do speak for themselves.

What are words creating in your life? Your tongue or someone else's tongue will steer the course of your life. Control your tongue and control the tongues you let around you. Once your mouth is in control, your life will begin to be in control.

It doesn't take much to get you off course. Simple phrases like, "I feel like I'm about to die," can be harmful. A small flame can become a great fire. Remember that negative statements amplify your problems. The words you conceive in your heart and speak out of your mouth release a spiritual force like dynamite. Your words can rearrange and change things.

If like me you've spoken negative words, make a course correction. Repent, and begin making positive confessions.

Dear Lord, I realize that there is power in the words that I speak. I pray that my words will build up not tear down, bless rather than curse, encourage not discourage. Let my mouth be filled with good. I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart will be acceptable in your sight.