



Royal Oak
VICTORY CHURCH

August 6, 2017 ~ Pastor Sheldon Ball
Love Does Part 5

As many of you are aware, we have been spending our summer looking at how we can put love into action in our series called Love Does.

We have been looking at the idea that for love to be really effective then it has to be doing something, but more specifically, that each of us needs to pay attention to what God is saying to us and to then respond in obedience to that calling.

Last week Pastor Dustin did a great job looking at how we can take Jesus' example and teaching, and adjust our attitude to see obedience as an opportunity rather than an obligation.

So far every part of this series has looked at actions and activities to put love into action, but we have not yet broached the subject that was in our video chapter that we just saw, that being love's ability to have impact through the effect of our words.

Who here remembers the old saying, "*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me*"?

I don't know who ever thought this up and then decided it would be a good idea to teach it to people, because it's just not true.

The words we say, and the words others say to us, have tremendous impact on our lives – both to build us up and to tear us down.

This saying, while somewhat over playing the issue, is far more appropriate, I think.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will make me go in a corner and cry by myself for hours." – Eric Idle (Comedian)

What this means is that we have to be very careful with our words if we want to show love, because people are not just paying attention to how we act, but also how we respond with our words.

We saw this very clearly earlier when Andrea and Joelle showed us a great example with toothpaste.

Bob Goff wrote in his book, *Love Does*, the following sentence that has really stuck with me, *“I used to think the words spoken about us describe who we are, but now I know they shape who we are.”*

This is because God has designed each of us to live in community with one another, rather than living isolated.

Part of the reasoning is because God uses those around us to encourage us to take on those daring feats that He is calling us to do.

In fact, the word encouragement is defined as, *“any act of inspiration that provides courage to face a challenge.”*

Life does become difficult at times, but in those times, as a people of faith we should live our lives with hope fed by encouragement.

For some of us this means we have to build relationships where we can be exposed to this; it might just be the piece you are missing to take that next step of faith and obedience.

However, we all have the responsibility of speaking encouragement into the lives of others; the New Testament outlines more than 30 times that it is the duty of believers to do this. It is also outlined as a spiritual gift in Romans 12:8.

Many of us probably have somebody in our life that we know that excels in this. Anytime we are down, or we just need that push to keep going, we know exactly who to call.

Not all of us are like that; some of us don't have this natural tendency. But I want to challenge all of you here today that this is something that should be worked on.

We should all be people of encouragement.

So what does that look like?

In your Bibles, turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 18.

For those of you that are new to the Bible, the book of Proverbs can be found almost half way through, just after the book of Psalms.

Looking at Verse 21, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”

Another translation says, “The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”

In this verse we see two very clear ways that we can impact a person when we speak into their lives.

But we also need to understand that this isn't just about the words that we speak to others – that is a key part of this – but this also has an impact upon our own lives through the self-talk we play out in our minds.

Just as we can speak life or death into those around us, we can do the same thing to ourselves.

I want to look at each in turn, so that we can avoid those things that cause death, and work on the ways that bring life.

Death

The interesting thing I found during my study of this verse is the truth that exists in it.

Leading neuroscientists, including Dr. Caroline Leaf, have found that negative thoughts (those negative words that we internalize and take on as truth) actually damage our physical bodies.

Quoting Dr. Leaf, “There is mounting scientific evidence demonstrating the intimate relationship between the brain, the rest of the nervous system, the endocrine system [that is hormonal part of our body] and the immune system. Because mind controls matter, therefore, thinking is the pre-eminent influence

on health. It has been shown from various sources that 75 to 98% of illnesses are a direct result of our thought life.”

She also references the research of Dr. Herbert Benson, the founder of the Mind/Body Institute at Harvard Medical School, who shows that negative thoughts lead to stress, which affects our body’s ability to heal itself.

What that means is that toxic thinking literally ‘wears down’ the brain and the rest of the body.

So when King Solomon says that our words can bring life or death, science is now proving that to be a literal fact. God has wired our brains and our thought life in such a way that negative thoughts are toxic to our very lives.

It then becomes very clear that we need to not only prevent the negative words said to us from being taken on as truth, but we also need to play a role by controlling our own words.

Proverbs outlines five very clear things that can get us in trouble, and thus, we need to stop doing.

Because this is the Family Service I want to go through these quickly, but I also want to make sure we are all on the same page, so I am going to define each as we go.

1. Gossip

Gossip is spreading personal or private information about others, without their consent. This includes rumours and, for the kids here today, it also includes tattling.

The reason gossip is hurtful is because you are violating someone’s trust.

The information was given to you in confidence and you choose to pass that on; you have violated the safety that existed in that relationship.

Proverbs 16:28 says, “A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.”

2. Lying

Lying is spreading false information or not being truthful.

Proverbs 12:22 says, “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth.”

3. Slander

Slander is a harmful or false statement *intentionally* designed to injure the reputation of someone.

Proverbs 12:18 says, “Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.”

Another translation says, “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

4. Flattery

Flattery is trying to please someone through insincere praise and compliments.

Proverbs 26:23 says, “Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot.”

5. Argument

Argument, in its negative form, is a vigorous and bitter verbal disagreement.

Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

If we can stop doing these five things, which as we saw is literally speaking death towards someone, then we have the ability to do the exact opposite in their lives as well, and that is to speak...

Life

One great example of this from the New Testament comes from the life of Barnabas.

Barnabas' real name was Joseph, but according to the book of Acts, he was given the nickname out of respect and for what the apostles observed in his life.

Barnabas means 'son of encouragement'.

He would have been one of those people I mentioned earlier that you loved being around because they were always lifting you up and pushing you forward no matter what you are going through.

But I think one of the most significant aspects of his life was his relationship with Paul.

After Saul's acceptance of Jesus, before his name had been changed to Paul, he began teaching and preaching in Damascus.

Of course the Jews there did not take kindly to this and tried to kill him, so he escaped from the city.

Acts 9 tells us what happened next.

"And when he [Saul] had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord,

"...who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

"So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." (Acts 9:26-28)

Later in Acts we see the accounts of the two of them travelling around the Roman Empire spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

Just think what might have happened if Barnabas had not come alongside Saul, listened intently to his story, and then encouraged the apostles to accept the truth of his conversion and walked in relationship with him for years.

The same power that Proverbs talks about residing in the words we speak were so clearly conveyed by Barnabas, and they are no different for each of us today.

That power resides in each of us if we are willing to speak it out.

If we really look at every great story of history, we see that no one achieves anything great without help. Great achievers became all that they were because somebody in their life believed in them and spoke encouragement to them.

Teachers, think about it. A word of encouragement from you can change a child's life forever.

I saw a study that said that almost every child that is on the honour roll at school is there because of the specific encouragement they received from a teacher about how they were excelling in school.

Coaches, think about it. A word of encouragement from you can change how a young athlete feels about themselves for an entire season, and maybe an entire lifetime.

MPK volunteers, think about it. Sitting down and engaging with a child by telling them how great they are doing, how much God loves them, and how much you enjoy seeing them in class can change their trajectory and faith walk for all eternity.

Employers, think about it. A word of encouragement can make a good employee a great employee.

Some of us are a lot better at delivering truth, but honest feedback needs to find a balance between truth and encouragement.

19th Century American philosopher, William James, said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."

One of my kid's favourite songs is called "Speak Life" by tobyMac. I am sure many of you have heard it on the radio.

I love the words of the chorus:

Speak life, speak life. When the sun won't shine and you don't know why.

Look into the eyes of the broken hearted; watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope, you speak love, you speak life.

Each of us has a choice with the words that we speak; we get to choose whether we will speak death or whether we will speak life.

We get to choose whether we will bring darkness, or whether we will bring the light into the darkness.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to make the right choice, when he writes, "Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

"And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now..." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

This week's challenge comes directly out of this. I want each of us to take the time this week to 'Intentionally Encourage Someone'.

And be specific – it shows that you were paying attention.

Because when it comes down to its very core, *Love Speaks Life*.