

The Power of Words

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Proverbs 18:21 (ESV) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Introduction: Words are more than just sounds produced by air passing through our mouths. Words hold enormous power. They can both construct and destroy.

Some of us may still remember the influence of others' remarks in our lives. Perhaps a mentor, a teacher, a relative, a friend, or even a chance encounter with someone who changed the course of our lives simply by what they said to us.

As a young man, I remember coming into a men's clothing store to browse and the salesman, who was an older man, asked me to try on a leather jacket. When he informed me how much it would cost, I remarked, "I am not worth that much." The man was taken aback by my statement and replied, "Young man, don't ever say that again; you are worth far more than any material thing."

That stern yet compassionate correction altered my perception of myself, and I've come to see that my worth is found in who I am in Christ rather than what I wear or have in material items.

I did not buy the leather jacket, but the man's words had a positive impression on me.

Consider this: of all God's creatures on earth, only humans have the ability to communicate through spoken language.

The question is how are we using our words? What can we do to make sure that what comes out of our mouth is producing life and not death?

Words do more than just convey information; they can influence our life for good or harm. They can either unite or divide people. They can either stir up violence and hatred or inspire peace and bring people together.

The devil understands this principle and is continually looking for ways to divide and conquer, to pull down and destroy families, marriages, churches, and communities, and one of the primary methods he uses is the exchange of harmful words.

In the garden of Eden, he used words to instill in Adam and Eve a sense of mistrust in God, prompting them to eat the forbidden fruit, resulting in the loss of their pure relationship with God.

Proverbs 18:21 (AMP) Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it and indulge it will eat its fruit and bear the consequences of their words.

We all know how harmful words can be. Many people live with regrets for hurting others and losing relationships because of something they said in a fit of rage or from a place of hurt. They wish it was possible to travel back in time and express themselves differently.

When we allow anger, resentment, offense, or bitterness to take root in our life, we give the enemy the opportunity to use our words to tear down rather than build up those around us.

Ephesians 4:27 (AMP) And do not give the devil an opportunity [to lead you into sin by holding a grudge, or nurturing anger, or harboring resentment, or cultivating bitterness].

When we nurture anger, hold grudges, and harbor resentment in our hearts it effects the way we talk.

Luke 6:45 (EXB) People speak the things that are in their hearts [For the mouth speaks what overflows from the heart].

The enemy will use the negatives words and actions of others to get to our heart and if he succeeds, he will plant bitterness in us and then that bitterness will grow, and we will find ourselves using our words to hurt others. Thus, the saying, "hurting people hurt people."

This is why Hebrews 12:15b (LB) Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.

In its context the root of bitterness (poison) here is used metaphorically for a bad person, or a person holding unsound doctrines and endeavoring to spread them among the church.

However, the idea is that when we keep an out-of-balance belief or an unsettled offense, it grows in us and manifests itself through our words, which, like poison, destroy our relationships.

We have a choice every day to speak life or death. It won't always be easy because the human nature tends to lean towards the negative.

We cannot travel back in time and correct our mistakes, but we can learn from them and redeem the time we have now. We can also decide to utilize our mouth to express life. We can use our words to provide value and encouragement others.

So, how do we utilize our words to build rather than tear down?

- 1. Chose to speak life**

To speak life is to be a person who seeks to encourage, edify and bless others through what we say.

Proverbs 15:4 (AMP) A soothing tongue [speaking words that build up and encourage] is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue [speaking words that overwhelm and depress] crushes the spirit.

To speak life is to not allow any worthless, destructive talk to come out of our mouth.

Ephesians 4:29 (ESV) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Before you say what you're about to say ask yourself:

Will my words build up or tear down? Does it fit the occasion or is this the right time? Is it grace-filled? Would the Holy Spirit approve or be grieved?

Ephesians 4:30 (AMP) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him]

When our hearts are filled and led by the Holy Spirit, our tongue becomes a powerful instrument for encouraging those around us, canceling out the works of the devil.

The Holy Spirit desires peace, unity and peace for the community of believers. Although it may be a process He will always lead to restoration, healing and harmony.

Ephesians 4:2-3 (NLT) Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Ephesians 4:30-32 (NLT) And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

2. Pray

Psalms 141:3 (ESV) Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

(CEV) Help me to guard my words whenever I say something.

Psalms 19:14 (AMP) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable *and* pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my [firm, immovable] rock and my Redeemer.

3. Be filled with God's word

Colossians 3:16-17 (ESV) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

When we fill our minds and hearts with God thoughts and worship from a place of surrender and humility our mouths begin to express thoughts and attitudes that honor the Spirit.

Life is in the power of the tongue. When the tongue is consecrated, when it is guided and controlled by a heart full of the Holy Spirit, it becomes a mighty power to destroy the works of the devil.

- Believe your words matter
- Evaluate your words
- Choose to change
- Surrender your thoughts