

## Watch Your Words

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Proverbs 18:21*

*“Words that do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness.”  
Mother Teresa*

As young children, often on the playground, we heard the age old adage “Stick and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Nice thought, but it’s a lie. According to God’s Word in Proverbs 18:21, words have power to give life or death. To hurt or heal. Words can hurt us. Death lurks behind destructive words. Someone said “Stick and stones can bruise your body for a few days, but words can scar your soul for life.”

How many of us are soul-scarred because someone we trusted and had significant influence over our lives didn’t watch their words? That would be most of us. Significant people like parents, teachers, coaches, pastors, friends, relatives, co-workers, bosses etc. wounded us deeply with words that spoke death into our minds and hearts instead of life. .

According to Proverbs 18:21, words contain power. Unimaginable power. God, through the wisdom writer Solomon, says so. God knows something about the power of words. It is amazing that God created the heavens and earth by uttering words. God spoke and creation appeared (Genesis 1-2). Our Creator uttered “*Let there be light, and there was light.*” Words, God’s word, brought life-giving light to earth’s darkness.

Words have power to create...and power to destroy. Because life boils down to relationships, a vital key to healthy, mutually-satisfying relationships is how we speak to each other. Successful relationships require life to survive and thrive. Words make or break relationships because they have the power of life or death.

Speak negative, critical, demeaning, tear down words, and watch a marriage die. On the other hand, speak positive, uplifting, build up words and a marriage will look like it was made in heaven.

### Truth About Words

Words can be toxic and deadly or refreshing and life-giving. Words are either constructive or destructive. Words beat up or build up. Our words either level people or lift them up. Words give life to life or take life from life.

Think about how the words of others or your own words have brought life or death to living. Do you speak life or death through your words? Would people who know you best say your words bring life or death to them?

In his book, Soul Detox, author Craig Groeschel, writes “The potency of godly words can revive, heal, and change our lives. Ungodly words have the power to bind, imprison and destroy.”

- Creative words create.
- Destructive words destroy.
- Hurtful words crush.
- Helpful words build up.
- Toxic words poison.
- Soothing words heal.
- Faith-filled words bring life.
- Faithless words bring death.

Adam and Eve experienced the power of words in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). God spoke with them daily in Paradise. Imagine walking and talking with God! His Word was life sustaining, provided security and gave positive direction to our first parents.

Enter the serpent Satan. His evil word “*did God say?*” beguiled and deceived Adam and Eve to doubt God’s good word. Instead of paying attention to God’s Word and watching their responses to the evil one, Adam and Eve received and believed evil words from the devil.

Turning their backs on God’s life giving word, Satan’s word brought death. Humanity’s first family lost everything, most importantly, fellowship with God. Adam and Eve were booted from the garden because they didn’t watch whose words they would follow. And they didn’t watch their words.

Words do matter...they really do!

## **Straight Talk About Talking**

Because words have power to bring life or death, you and I have to be careful, not careless, about what we say. Words bless or curse life. Here are a few examples of words that bless or curse.

### **Words That Curse**

- You will never amount to anything.
- You are such a loser.

- Nobody will ever love you.
- I wish I never had you.
- You are nothing like your brother.
- Why can't you ever do anything right?
- You are a real piece of work.
- I am sick of you.
- I wish we had never gotten married.
- I never really loved you.
- You will never change.
- My life would be so much better if you weren't around.

### Words That Bless

- I love you.
- I believe in you.
- I am so proud of you.
- I couldn't have a better friend than you.
- You make my life worth living.
- I am more thankful for you than you will ever know.
- You bring so many blessings to my life.
- I thank God everyday for you.
- You can do anything God calls you to do.
- You are a winner and will be successful in life.
- I would marry you all over again.
- I don't know what I would do without you in my life.

We choose whether to speak positive words that bless and build up, or negative words that curse and tear down. A quick study of Ephesians 4:29 reveals how we should speak.

*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word good for edification, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

Born and raised in Washington State, I love Delicious brand apples. Recently, I grabbed a big, bright red Delicious apple from our fruit bowl, washed it, and sunk my teeth into what I thought would be a juicy, crisp bite of fresh fruit.

To my surprise, I bit into a soft, rotten spot deep inside the shiny apple. Yuk! Icky it was to say the least. With a lightning fast reaction, I spit the brown-colored, slimy, goop into the awaiting jaws of the garbage disposal. Then I ran out the back door, tossed the rotten apple into the woods, smashing it on one of the towering oaks bordering our backyard.

Rotten fruit. Good for nothing.

The phrase Paul uses in our verse “*unwholesome word*” means rotten fruit. The meaning is crystal clear. No rotten fruit is to proceed from the mouth of God’s people. Instead, Paul instructs us regarding the fruit that should come from our lips through our words.

**1. Speak words that build up.** Everyone needs built up...regularly. Nobody likes being torn down. Everyone loves being built up. We all need a lift to overcome life’s challenges. Words that edify encourage us and instill us with confidence.

A Christian’s words are to build up and make people feel good about God, themselves, others and life. Believers in Christ are exhorted to not use tear down words... because they are like rotten fruit.

**2. Speak words that meet the need of the moment.** Speak positive, uplifting words that help, not hinder people. When people are wounded by life and perplexed by problems, they need a good word from God. They don’t need man’s opinion. They need to hear timely wisdom from God’s Word through the words we speak.

When speaking to people who need a good word, ask God for wisdom to know the right words and the right time to speak them. Speak words that zero in on the pressing problem. Speak wise words from God’s Word because God has the answer for every person’s need.

**3. Speak words that minister grace.** When people are searching, wondering, hurting or frustrated they don’t need a harsh lecture! Life can be hard and brutal. GRACE IS THE SOFT TOUCH. God’s grace through His Word and His people softens life’s blows and opens hearts to God’s healing, restoring and renewing love. Our words need to be full (King James Version says “seasoned”) of grace, mercy, lovingkindness, comfort, strength and encouragement.

Put a smile on a person’s face by ministering grace through your words.

## Self Talk

Self-talk is what we do when we speak to ourselves. Self-talk is part of our life and has a significant impact on our emotional health and wellbeing. I talk to myself all the time, and so do you. Self-talk is normal. When we start answering ourselves, especially out loud, it may be time to seek some counsel!

Self-talk is either positive or negative. One of Satan's most effective spiritual weapons is negative self-talk. The devil is a tear down devil. He loves it when we tear ourselves down with our words. The enemy of our souls is relentless in tempting us to speak lowly of ourselves. Negative self-talk feeds low self-esteem. Talk yourself down and you will feel down about life. Negative self-talk contains words that produce death in our souls.

On the other hand, positive self-talk, words that build us up, feed healthy self-esteem and self-worth. Talking ourselves up motivates us to feel good about life.

Positive self talk beats negative self-talk every time!!!

Take personal inventory? How is your self-talk? Positive or negative? What kind of words do you say to yourself in private and public? Would your closest friends say you build yourself up or tear yourself down? Be honest.

**We are what we think. We have what we say. So choose to think right and say the right things about yourself.**

## Speaking From The Heart

Our words reveal our character. Jesus taught that what comes out of our mouth is what is in our heart. Speaking to hypocritical religious leaders, the Lord makes it clear for them and you and me that the words we speak say a lot about who we are.

*“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*

*The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil.*

*And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.*

*For by your words you shall be justified; and by your words you shall be condemned.* *Matthew 12:33-37*

Jesus talks about good fruit and bad fruit. Good fruit and bad fruit are tied to our words. Good words that come from a good heart produce good fruit. Bad words that proceed from an evil heart produce bad fruit. Jesus makes it very clear that each of us will be accountable for our words, and will be judged accordingly.

If our words come from the heart, not just our mouth, then we better guard our heart. Proverbs 4:23-27 states *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put devious lips far from you. Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you; watch the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right or to the left; turn your foot from evil.”*

Life flows from the heart. Life-giving words spring forth from hearts that are filled with the life of God. Death-producing words spring forth from hearts that are dead the ways of God.

I, and I alone, am responsible for my heart and my words. Guarding my heart and watching my words is my business, not someone else's. I choose the condition of my heart and the words I speak. When I say something I shouldn't, I can't say the devil made me do it.

You and I have a heart problem when we don't watch our words. The words that come out of my mouth are my words. They proceed from my heart. No matter how much a person or situation may frustrate us, you and I must take care of our heart and be careful with our words.

**Watch your words by watching your heart.**

## **Tame Your Tongue**

James 3:1-12

Take your Bible and turn to James chapter three. Then buckle up your spiritual seatbelt. You are about to take a ride that will show you how evil our tongue is and how important it is that we tame it.

James makes seven observations about our tongue.

- 1. We all stumble with our words. A perfectly mature man doesn't, but there aren't many of them around.**
- 2. The tongue is a small, yet boastful organ that wreaks havoc in life.**
- 3. The tongue is a fire, setting life aflame.**
- 4. The tongue is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.**
- 5. The tongue is a fountain of both blessing and cursing.**
- 6. The tongue should be one or the other: A curse or blessing. We choose which one.**
- 7. The tongue can't be tamed.**

Brother James, you hit us right between our spiritual eyes. Thanks for this negative news bulletin. Our tongue is untamable. So what are we to do? Give up and give in to this restless evil bent on hell residing in my mouth? No. Not at all.

**We must be diligent to do our best, with God's help, to tame our tongue by watching our words through self-control (one of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23), self-discipline, and practice, practice, practice!**

**Being aware of the danger of our tongues is the beginning of bringing it under control. Aware, we must then be vigilant to keep it under, like Paul exhorts us in I Corinthians 9:24-27 to keep our body under control if we want to win the race of life.**

**Practice may not make us perfect concerning our tongue, but working hard to tame our tongue will keep us out of trouble and bring blessing to us and all who hear our words.**

### **Speak Life Giving Words**

Bring life to your life with your words. Speak God's life-giving words over your life. For example:

- Need healing from illness or disease? Speak God's Word over your body. By Christ's stripes you are healed (Isaiah 53:4-6, I Peter 2:24, Psalm 107:20).
- Seeking a new beginning? Confidently confess with your mouth that God will do something new (Isaiah 43:18-21, Revelation 21:5).
- Desiring restoration in your heart and emotions? Speak God's promises of restoration (Jeremiah 30:17, Psalm 23:1-3, Psalm 147:3, Psalm 34:17, Matthew 11:28-30).
- Need material provision? Speak God's promises to provide for you and your family (Philippians 4:19, Matthew 6:25-34, Ephesians 3:20, II Corinthians 9:8, Psalm 37:25).

Take a moment to look at Mark 11:22-24. Jesus teaches about moving mountains in life. Mountains are things that get in the way of our journey to glorify God and fulfill His will for our lives. Jesus declares "*Have faith in God.*" Then he addresses what I call say it faith. Mountain moving faith is faith THAT SPEAKS WORDS. Someone wise said about mountains: Don't talk about your mountain; talk to it. Speak to it with faith. Cast it out of the way in Jesus' name.

Say it faith works. So watch your words. Speak words of faith. Then watch God respond to your faith in Him.

God's people are to speak God's Word.

**In any and every situation you may find yourself in life, regarding you or the people you love, God has a positive word in His Word for you to speak with your mouth. Search and study scripture. Know His Word so you will know how to speak God's positive, life-producing words.**

## Scriptural Words About Our Words

The Bible is full of verses regarding our tongue and words. Take a Bible concordance and study the many references. The following few Scriptures will help you to speak life into your life and the people you love and care about.

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.”*  
Psalm 19:14

*“The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times. Thou, O Lord, will keep them, Thou will preserve him from this generation forever.”*  
Psalm 12:6-7

*“It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”*  
John 6:63

*“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their whole body.”*  
Proverbs 4:20-22

*“The one who guards his mouth preserves his life, the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.”*  
Proverbs 13:3

*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* Proverbs 15:1

*“Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword, they aimed bitter speech as their arrow.”*  
Psalm 64:3

*“There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”*  
Proverbs 12:18

*“Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor; O worker of deceit.”* Psalms 54:2



*“the upright speak what is helpful, the wicked speak rebellion.” Proverbs 10:12*

*“The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.”  
Proverbs 15:4*

*“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”  
Proverbs 16:24*

*“The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters, the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling  
brook.” Proverbs 18:4*

*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for  
edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who  
hear.” Ephesians 4:29*

*“Finally my brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right,  
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if there is any excellence  
and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”*

*Philippians 4:8*

(And I would add let your mouth speak these things too!!!)

## **Start Watching Your Words**

1. Recognize that your words either bring life or death.
2. Confess to the Lord words you speak which bring death. List them. Give them up to God. Over time, tear up the list.
3. Fill your mind and heart with God’s positive word in the Bible.
4. Discipline yourself to distinguish between words that give life and words that produce death. Know the difference. Wisely select your verbal responses to life situations.
5. Exercise self-control when people push your button and you want to retaliate with deadly words. Repel the urge to get even with nasty, evil words.
6. Resist and reject the world’s negative, deadly words. The world’s words are poison.
7. Associate with people who speak life, not death. Learn from godly people how to guard your heart and watch your words
8. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you control your mouth.
9. Ask a trusted friend to help you be accountable for your words.
10. Good words in, good words out. Bad words in, bad words out. That is how life works.

## **Watch Your Words...and Watch God Work!!!**

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