



SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD

The Power of Our Words

Life Reference: James 3:1-12

Focus Verse:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD" (Psalm 19:14).

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Unfortunately, this childish chant is not true. A stick may bruise our body for a few days, but words can bruise our spirit for many years. Our words have power: power to hurt, power to heal. To understand this power we have only to look at a mother cuddling a child, cooing words of love and comfort. Or, in contrast, listen to the angry outburst as two people let raw emotions spill out in argument.

A friend once shared the pain of her father's final words to her. They were not words of love but a bitter outpouring of rage at the turns of life. Unable to accept the blame for his own actions, he was transferring the blame to his child. That hurt of those final words stayed locked inside for years. Another person related the crushing blow as a child of hearing his father say, "I hate you." Words can definitely crush the spirit.

"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health" (Proverbs 12:18, New King James Version).



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Life Reflection:

Was there a time in your life when the words of another deeply wounded you? What impact did their words have upon your life?

Briefly relate a time when you were the one who spoke words of hurt or anger? Do you feel your words caused harm to that person?

In both instances, how did the hurtful things said affect your relationship? How did you each respond?

James recognized the impact of our speech on others. His epistle paints strong word pictures as he admonishes us:

“Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” (James 3:10, New King James Version).

The word *conversation* in the New Testament does not refer to our speech as much as our conduct or behavior (i.e. Ephesians 2:3; 4:22; Philippians 1:27). However, the two are closely related. Our “speech” reflects our “conversation” because it shows what is in our hearts.

Life Reflection:

Read Matthew 12:35 and 15:18-20.

Someone has stated that our words are a window into our heart. Do you feel this is true?



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Angry words spill from an angry heart. A profane person uses vile speech. A loving person speaks gracious words of love and goodness. Those we meet can tell if we are Christians by our speech as well as our actions. Both can enhance or destroy our witness. Colossians 4:5-6 admonishes us:

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

Life Reflection:

Think back over some of your conversations during the past week. Were your words sweet or bitter? Did they build up or tear down? Encourage or discourage? Praise or criticize? Show respect or disdain? Display purity or profanity, Christianity or hypocrisy?

Do I display more positive or negative patterns of speech?

Life Response:

James warns that “the tongue can no man tame” (3:8). Fortunately for us, the Spirit of God in our lives can control even the unruly tongue. It is no coincidence that God chose the tongue as a sign of the infilling of His Spirit (Isaiah 28:11; Acts 2:4). As we yield ourselves to Him, we also yield control of our speech patterns.

If you have not yet received God’s Spirit in your life, pray now for this life-changing experience.

My Prayer:

Oh, 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 praise and worship. I pray that the words of my mouth



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and the meditation of my heart will be acceptable in Your sight (Psalm 19:14). Let Your Spirit take full control of my life.

More Life with God References:

The Bible has so many verses which address our speech patterns that it might be easier to examine some of them by looking at the following list of things our words should do.

Quality	Scriptures	Evident in My Life?
Edify (build up, uplift)	Ephesians 4:29	
Encourage	Proverbs 12:25; Isaiah 50:4	
Testify of God	Psalm 145:11	
Give blessing and praise	Psalm 9:1, 2; 34:1; Hebrews 13:15	
Be without evil or malice	Psalm 34:13; Ephesians 4:31	
Show thankfulness	Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18	
Be pure	Proverbs 15:4, 26; Ephesians 4:29	
Be truthful, honest	Proverbs 12:19,22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:9	
Be gracious	Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 4:5-6	
Avoid gossip	Psalm 15:1,3; Proverbs 11:13	

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