

Words

Presented by Tressie Gade on 08/23/20
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One day, driving in my car, radio cranked up and tuned to a Christian radio station, I heard the song “Words” by Hawk Nelson. In case you haven’t heard it, it starts out with “They’ve made me feel like a prisoner, They’ve made me feel set free, They’ve made me feel like a criminal, Made me feel like a king, They’ve lifted my heart, To places I’d never been, And they’ve dragged me down, Back to where I began, Words can build you up, Words can break you down, Start a fire in your heart or, Put it out.” This song hit very close to home for me.

Have you ever heard the phrase “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”. That phrase is so untrue. Yes, sticks and stones can hurt you, they can cause physical wounds that others can see, but words, when used in hate, can create emotional wounds that sometimes never heal. The best way I have heard hateful words described is they are like toothpaste, once you say them the toothpaste is out of the tube and you can’t just put it back in. Words that cause pain or hurt can’t be taken back.

Words are powerful. Remember our scripture, Proverbs 15:4 “Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” Proverbs 16:24 “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.” Proverbs 18:4 “A person’s words can be life-giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook.” When we speak to others, we should speak out of kindness. How many times have we all heard the phrase, you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar? When you speak to others with kindness, there is a good chance that you will get kindness back.

And our other scripture from today, 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 1 says “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal”. Speak your words with love. Toby Mac perhaps said it best in his song “Speak Life” “Yo it’s crazy, amazing. We can turn our heart through the words we say. Mountains crumble with every syllable. Hope can live or die. So speak life, speak life, To the deadest darkest night. 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”

The way we talk to others in the world is so important. The words we choose can be hurtful or encouraging. God gave us this great thing called free will, we get to choose what we say, and to whom we say it, but it comes with a down side too. Sometimes we make the wrong choice and use words or a phrase that is hurtful to others. This is a hard road to navigate, politically correct, or PC words seem like that change all the time, so how do we make sure we use the right words? Ask. Ask someone how they like to be referred to. It may not be the easiest answer, but it is the simplest.

It’s not just the words we say by the tones we use and emotion behind the words. Try not to use words in anger. Try to think about what you are going to say before you say it. I know, that’s difficult. I know it’s hard not to snap back at someone who has thrown a

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verbal insult. I am as guilty of this fault as the next person, but I am trying to be better, and I ask that you also try and be better.

Words carry weight, and words carry. As any parent of a small child can tell you, they repeat things, and oftentimes what they repeat isn't what we want them too. One of my favorite musicals is *Into the Woods*, and the final song from the musical has a powerful warning, "Be careful the tale you tell, that's the spell, children will listen". Children are like sponges, they are absorbing everything around them and they are constantly learning from adults. They learn from us about how to talk to people, and what words are okay and not okay to use in public and in relation to others. If it sounds like I have some experience in this area I do, along with the wonderful things we have taught our daughter to say like her bedtime prayer and please and thank you, my husband and I may have accidentally taught Molly "shut up" or "kiss my butt". Oops.

This world we live in is complicated and it's getting more complicated by the second. I am the first to admit that sometimes I generalize people when I talk, and sometimes I put my foot in it, or put my foot in my mouth or whatever analogy you want to use for opening ones big mouth and saying the completely wrong thing. In those moments I ask for grace. Grace from whom I've offended and grace from myself. We can't all be perfect 100 percent of the time. And that's ok, all we can do is try to be better and do better.

If words can cause so much hurt, should we never speak again? No, speak out for what's right. Speak for those that don't have a voice. Show children how to be a voice for kindness and love. Have a discussion with someone different than you, that is the best way to learn about another culture or race. But have these discussions with love and kindness and respect.

Remember that song I mentioned at the beginning? The chorus goes "Let my words be life, Let my words be truth, I don't wanna say a word, Unless it points the world back to You". Let your words bring Jesus's message of love and acceptance into this challenging world. Let your words lift other up instead of putting them down.

There is so much negativity and hurt in the world right now, we need more positivity. Be the light. Be the hope. Take a moment and think about what you are going to say, before you say it. Speak out against injustice, but do so with kindness, and love, not hate. Remember that words are like toothpaste, so make sure you really want to say those words before you do and can't take them back. Speak hope. Give encouragement. Be positive. Spread Jesus's message of love for all.