

Power of the Tongue: Words Can Bring Death or Life

Our brains are very active. Research indicates that we think 70,000 thoughts daily on the average.

I am intrigued by this; so I decided to try an experiment on myself. In our comfy recliner, all alone, the house was quiet. In that silence, I purposefully tried to sit without engaging my mind.

I soon realized plenty of thoughts were forming. "What was I going to do today? What was God going to do for our ministry? Oh, I had to do laundry, I need to write that article." I think you get the picture. My mind was racing—and my thoughts were full of words.

Many of us know God wants to be victorious. However, that knowledge isn't always reflected in our words. The reality is that every one of us has spoken negatively about ourselves or about others. Generally before we speak negatively, we have already rehearsed the words in our minds. This is significant, because what we believe to be true and what we think about consistently we eventually speak out.

Negative thoughts become negative words, which become negative experiences—which results in our using more negative words. For instance, we say things such as: "We'll never be able to get financially ahead," "I want to give up" or "These negative things are just part of life—nothing can change them, including God." We think we're stating reality, but the more these words are repeated, the more we will find ourselves in the very situations, bringing us frustration.

The Word of God is frank about disciplining our speech:

- A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it

can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!

- “Even so, the tongue is a little part of the body and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles. The tongue is a fire, a world of evil. The tongue is among the parts of the body, defiling the whole body, and setting the course of nature on fire, and it is set on fire by hell. All kinds of beasts, and birds, and serpents, and things in the sea are tamed or have been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:5-8).
- “With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:9-10).

My family lives in Colorado Springs near Black Forest. You may have heard about the 2013 summer fire. Our home was put on mandatory evacuation and I can sincerely say the image of jumping flames and looming black smoke making its way toward our neighborhood did not bring a feeling of peace.

From one spark, that fire spread through thousands of acres and raged on unquenchingly for days. But thanks to firefighters and prayer those flames went from unstoppable to contained within two days. Thankfully our home and neighborhood were spared. Tragically 511 homes were destroyed.

This is a graphic image, but it's the type of picture James is painting in the above passage. Our words carry great power. The Greek word for curse is *katara*. It means “the power to harm.” If we repeatedly make negative confessions, our words become detrimentally empowered flames that are difficult to extinguish.

Romans 10:17 tells us, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith is a conviction that something is true and reliable. When something is audibly

spoken numerous times, positive or negative, faith is built upon those words.

Let's look at the positive fruit that our words bring:

- Words can bring healing.
- Our words can bring life and satisfaction.
- Truthful words live forever.
- Keeping our tongues from evil brings goodness and peace.
- Words of a disciple bring life to the weary.
- Wisdom and gracious speech bless those we relate to.
- Righteous words bring a fountain of life.
- Soothing words bring life.
- Pleasant words bring healing to our souls and bones.
- Gentle words turn away anger and wrath.
- Guarding our words preserves life.
- Guarding our words keeps our souls from trouble.

Friends, our words have the ability to manipulate our own well-being and others'. Words can bring death, or they can bring life, hope and purpose. When we pray and ask the Lord to help us guard our words, He is faithful to show us how to do it. We have the choice.

Becca Greenwood *is the co-founder and president of Christian Harvest International and Strategic Prayer Action Network (SPAN).*