

Is Your Concealed Weapon Reckless or Christlike?

Do you know you carry a concealed weapon? Everyone reading this is guilty. Yes, even you.

And no, I am not referring to a canister of eye-burning mace, nor am I referring to a razor-sharp pocketknife. I am alluding to a weapon that is sharper than any knife and burns much more than mace. It is a ubiquitous weapon among us. This weapon is our tongue. As you have the power to talk, you are armed and dangerous.

Many of us have heard it said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But all of us who have lived beyond age 2 know this is not true.

The reality is, words hurt. Words pierce. Words poison. If a teacher tells a student she isn't smart enough, those words can have long-lasting consequences. One student will apply to Harvard anyway. Another one will drop out of school tomorrow. When a doctor tells a patient they have only a few months to live, immediately the body begins to react around those words.

Isn't it interesting how words on a screen or a voice on a message can ruin or improve your entire day? You hear the phone ring and decide not to answer, not knowing it was the last conversation you would have with a loved one. She doesn't leave a message, and all you can think now is, "If only I could have heard her voice one last time."

Our words shape our culture. Our words reveal our character. Based on certain words, I can guess your profession or passion because we tend to speak in the language of what we love. It's a dangerous thing to assume God can change our hearts and our minds but not our words. It's a harmful thing to speak quickly and hear slowly. But many of us shoot a host of innocent

bystanders every day with our words because we have not yet learned to tame our tongues.

The Word says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21). The fruit of your words will help or hurt, elevate or subjugate, liberate or imprison. But let's go a little deeper. Sometimes your words are good but your tone needs training. Has anyone ever said to you, "It's not what you said but how you said it?" Or maybe, "What you said was right but your timing was wrong?"

When I speak about the weapon of the tongue, I don't want you to think about the use of words only. Also think about the tone, the timing, and the temperature of your words. Most arguments graduate from anger to hatred or disagreement to violence because of these three elements of tone, timing and temperature.

If your words are sizzling hot, this may not be the best time to release them. If your words are said after someone has suffered immense loss, then don't be surprised if what you say yields an unfavorable reaction. The tongue is pregnant with the potential to give birth to life, vitality, hope and peace. It's all about how we choose to use the weapon.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used his words to build people up and bring peace. He never picked up a weapon to fight. Instead he let his words swing for him. His philosophy was one of nonviolent direct action, which means he talked people out of the depravity of segregation. Others were convinced the world would only change through militant force and retaliation. But Dr. King adopted another way. His words sparked change in racial, social, and economic policies during the civil rights movement.

Words, like money are amoral. Depending on the user, words can build you or break you. The same way Scripture was used in the

past to humiliate slaves and degrade women, Scripture can be used to liberate the disenfranchised and eradicate gender bias. It's all in the way you use and understand the power of your words.

I pray that you will think about the side effects of a seemingly trivial conversation. I hope the way Jesus uses His words will motivate you to turn your weapon of mass destruction into a tool of powerful motivation. I desire that we all ask ourselves "How would Jesus speak about this?" instead of rushing to give someone a piece of our mind. If we are going to accurately and appropriately re-present Jesus, then this is an area we must learn to manage well.

Jesus is the ultimate example of someone who managed his tongue well. He modeled for us how to manage our words in a way that honors God and helps others. He knew the power of words in such a way that He practiced thoughtful communication in one situation and responded silently in another. He asked rhetorical questions in order to expose ulterior motives, and He modeled what it means to be quick to hear and slow to speak. Quite simply, Jesus knew what to say, when to say it, and how to say it (see Matt. 12).

My prayer is that you will watch your words and shape them after Jesus. May Psalm 19:14 be your prayer today and always: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

✖ Adapted from RePresent Jesus by **Dharius Daniels**, copyright 2014, published by Passio, Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group. As God's representatives on earth what Jesus are we representing? Is it the one concocted of religion, opinion and a little truth, or the one shown in the Bible to be life-giving, direction altering and destiny revealing? This book identifies 12 core character traits of Jesus and shows you how each can be applied to your life to help with God's priority for you: to conform you to His image and re-present Him to a

dying world. To order your copy click here.

Prayer Power for the Week of Feb. 9, 2015

Ask the Lord this week to put a guard on your lips and help you use your words wisely. Ask Him to keep you conscious of what you hear and what you say to yourself and others. Call on Him to help you use words of love and encouragement when needed. As admonished in Scripture, continue to pray for those in authority over us. Pray that God would help our leaders make wise decisions concerning our nation and its effects around the world. Continue to pray for more laborers for His harvest fields and the spread of worldwide revival when you pray for the nation and Israel (Ps. 19:14; I Tim. 2:1-4).