

The Power of (Our) Words*Proverbs 18:21*

Introduction: The old playground chant, "sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me" really is not true. Words CAN hurt, because words are powerful. The words we speak literally have the ability to impact the lives of the people around us for good or for evil. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about this. Proverbs 18:21 boils it down as clearly as possible - death and life are in the power of the tongue. Since this is true, we need to be people who are growing more and more life-giving in our speech. May this study help encourage each one of us in this direction.

Opening Discussion: Who is someone who has had a positive influence on your life through their words? Explain.

Read Proverbs 18:21 and Ephesians 4:29

1. How would you summarize the teaching of these passages?
2. How hopeful do you feel about actually obeying the command of Ephesians 4:29?

Read Proverbs 10:32; 11:9; 12:18, 25; 15:1, 4; 25:23

3. What are some of the ways that these proverbs suggest that our speech can produce death? life?

Brian said:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Our words really can change history. What kinds of words do you speak? Are they life-giving? Are they good for edification according to the need of the moment? Do they give grace to those who hear?

4. How would you evaluate the nature of your words? Where do you do well? Where do you sense a need to grow?
5. What perspective does Matthew 12:33-35 offer about the nature of the words we speak? And how does this affect your thoughts about your own struggle to be more life-giving in your speech?

Brian said:

If you find words coming out of your mouth that are producing death, don't make excuses like: "I don't know what I was thinking" or "I guess I was just tired" or "That's just the way I am." And don't just make commitments to try harder to not do it next time. Those things don't deal with the heart issue that is being revealed by your words. Here's how you deal with a heart problem: you confess your sin and you trust God to transform you. Instead of making excuses for your words, acknowledge to God the condition of your heart - that it is angry or harsh or impatient. Whatever the condition of your heart is confess your sin to God and know that in Christ it is forgiven. And then trust God to transform your heart. Ask him to replace your anger with love; to replace your impatience with patience. Ask Him to fill up your heart with the very life of Christ.

6. How do you respond to Brian's thoughts here?

Brian said:

Finally, **be intentional to speak words of life to the important people in your life.** It's not enough to just refrain from saying words of death. The tongue has the power of life and we need to be purposeful in speaking words of life. There are people all around you that need to hear encouraging words, for someone to believe in them, for someone to speak life into them - your friends, your spouse, your kids, your employees, the kids you are coaching on that little league team, that checkout clerk. Maybe even someone whom you will talk to after this service

7. Who are some of the people in your life to whom you need to be intentional to speak words of life? What ideas do you have about what you can/should do?

8. What do you sense is the main thing God is saying to you through this study?