The Power of Words
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Words are free and plentiful, but using them is a serious business. With them we wield an influence and a power for good or harm. All of us, each of us. We know from personal experience that the misuse of words stings, wounds, and burdens us, but uplifting and affirming words brighten our lives. Sometimes words can change the whole course of a life. Sometimes it’s our own.

God wants us to be active and skilled in the many good uses of words. He wants us to be sentries of the words of our mouths, ambassadors that reach out to the world with the words of truth and life, encouragers that choose to bless and enrich others with words, and so on.

In this issue of Refresh, the authors explore the power of words. They give us strategies for governing our words and motivation to make it a daily habit. They help us to realize where some of our wrong words are coming from, and how to avoid them. They encourage us to feed our minds and hearts on God’s good words, and to use them to squelch our negative words and to build an arsenal of good ones.

This issue has a new format. It is a collection of short Bible studies, complete with questions and a prayer. We hope you are blessed by the power of their words. - Beebe
Shortly after my dad died, I discovered a treasure on the storage closet shelf. After lifting a rectangular item from a box and removing its tissue paper covering, I found a decades-old leather scrapbook I’d never seen before. The brittle yellowed pages were bound with a brown satin cord.

Placing my palms and fingers on each side of the cover sheet, I cautiously opened it to reveal the treasure—a collection of letters my grandmother Mamie’s three sons sent to her during World War II.

What a brave and patriotic woman she was! With one son serving in the Navy and another in the Army, her remaining son requested permission to join his brothers in service. As a seventeen-year-old, he needed parental permission, which she granted.

For days, I cradled her scrapbook in my lap, mining every detail from letters written by a teenage foot soldier with round, wire-rimmed glasses and a heavy metal helmet serving in enemy territory. Not only did I notice dates and recorded events, but I learned more about the man who became my father. His correspondence offered insight into the fiber of his being.

Not willing to miss an opportunity to write home, my dad once penned a letter under a dim light bulb in the latrine, his words echoing love for his family and resolve to serve his country. From Germany, he told of serving as a scout for his company, traveling ahead to ensure their safety.

Without this scrapbook’s treasures, I would have missed further insight into my dad’s character and how it influenced his life and mine. I now understand why he raised my brothers and me to honor God, love our country, and obey those who cared for us.

Reading his words enabled me to see him with a new lens. He was a seventeen-year-old Army private who observed the horrors of war because of patriotism, a devoted son who spared his parents additional worry by writing frequently, a brave soldier who traveled alone to ensure the safety of his company, a scared teenager who carried a small devotional in the breast pocket of his uniform, and a young man who thanked God that he and his brothers safely returned to US soil. In my book, he was a hero.

On the fifteenth of February, 1970, when I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I received another collection of treasured letters—a new Bible. I took it to school, church, and on long car rides with my family. Eager to learn more about my heavenly Father, I read it in the morning and at night,
underlining verses and memorizing passages. Do you remember treasuring a new Bible?

The writer who penned the following words recognized the worth of the Scriptures. He addressed God as he declared, “I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure” (Psalm 119:162 NKJV).

How did the psalmist come to value Yahweh’s communication with His people? Let’s look for clues in this verse that will help us embrace the riches in God’s Word.

I rejoice

Evidently, the psalmist positioned himself not only to hear or read the sacred words personally, but he allowed the power of its truths to touch his heart. Perhaps he marveled that the Creator would communicate with man, but he spoke of a personal connection. The cherished words sparked joy in his soul and led the writer to exclaim praise.

When we set aside time to hear from God through His Word, His Spirit massages truths into our hearts so that we can rejoice. The power of God’s words must have changed the psalmist, and as a result, his internal jubilance burst forth in worship. May their power do the same for us.

… at Your word …

This writer clearly did not consider the Scripture as a once-a-week reading assignment or irrelevant language meant for others. Rather, he placed such high value on the words that he acknowledged God as their Source and expressed his amazement at the heaven-to-earth communication prize he’d experienced. Can you picture him possibly stretching out his arms while gazing at a star-filled night and exclaiming his amazement at Yahweh’s recorded words? His proclamation must have brought joy to the heart of God.

… as one who finds great treasure.

When the writer penned Psalm 119:162, he had surely heard or read God’s word before, but this time, its power must have settled into the depths of his heart. He labeled the collection of heavenly words a treasure, a precious possession. The psalmist must have understood a truth we read in the New Testament: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV). May we cherish the words from our heavenly Father in a renewed way.

Four Ways to Treasure God’s Word

1. Dedicate time.

Whether you’re an early bird or a night owl, designate a time to learn more about God’s character and to seek His guidance through Bible study. Consider the time as a daily appointment with the Author of the letter you’re reading, and ask Him to teach you as you read and pray.

2. Discover its value.

Post verses on your mirror or desk and memorize them. Watch for the ways the Holy Spirit calls them to mind when you need them for comfort, correction, and guidance.

3. Delight in the words of God.

Reading some of the psalms as prayers is an effective way to worship and praise God when you begin your time together. When the Lord
applies specific verses to your life, record those personal messages in a journal for future reflection. Ask Him to show you passages to pray for yourself and others and to lead you to a group study.

4. Declare the truth and power of Scripture.

Speak Bible verses to yourself and allow them to serve as your sword in spiritual battles. As our example, Jesus used God’s words to fight Satan when He was tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). As God leads, share His words with others who need encouragement or a word of witness.

The Bible, God’s inspired Word, is a tried-and-tested scrapbook of treasured words, yet it is relevant to our twenty-first century lives. Consider it a personal letter from God, and ask the Holy Spirit to use the power and wonder of its contents to reveal the character of God and His plan for your life. A treasure indeed!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Like the psalmist, we rejoice that You speak to us through the Bible. Use the power of Your words to transform us that we will love and serve You more. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

“The Bible, God’s inspired Word, is a tried-and-tested scrapbook of treasured words.”

Questions:

1. According to this study, why may the psalmist have treasured the word of God?
2. Which Bible verses have become a treasure to you?
3. How have those verses been valuable to you in daily life?
4. Which of these verses have you memorized, or you would like to?
5. According to the following verses, why is the word of God our treasure?
   a. Psalm 119:11
   b. Psalm 119:133
   c. Luke 11:28
   d. John 5:24
   e. John 17:17
   f. 1 Peter 2:2

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Can our words speak life or death? Yes! Explosive, thoughtless words can wreak havoc. When I was thirteen, my father disciplined me and told me, “Go to your room.” I shouted back, “I hate you!” as I ran from the room. I did not know at the time, that two years later from his death bed, he would say to me, “You don’t really love this old man, do you?” “I do love you, Daddy,” I replied softly. That was a long time ago, but I have never forgotten it. My words spoken in anger had cut deeply. I still must pray as David did, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14 ESV).

Demeaning, detrimental words are as powerful as dynamite. They shape our beliefs, drive our behavior, and can devastate our lives. Dynamite comes from the Greek word for power. Just like dynamite, vengeful, toxic words can detonate with explosive force, and in just seconds, they can turn our world upside down. Painful words land in our hearts and spread out like shrapnel. Cruel, thoughtless words can never be taken back. They may be forgiven, but they can never be forgotten. The damage is done, and the scars remain. They can destroy relationships.

So how can we speak life through our words? How can we take the heavy load of anxiety created by hateful remarks and promulgate good words to lift hearts? “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad” (Proverbs 12:25 ESV). We can tap into God’s power, and use our mouth to speak powerful, restorative words that can heal hearts. First, however, the meditations of our hearts have to be in line with God’s desires, and then we can utter uplifting...
words. “You have a talent for …,” “Thank you for going the extra mile …,” “I admire the way you …,” “Your support means so much …,” “I really appreciate how I can always count on you …,” and “Your effort and persistence are astounding …” are just a few of the examples of words that validate.

A delightful and timely word can bring energy back into our hearts and lift the weight of our burdens. Mark Twain once said; “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” Praise enlivens us and causes us to stand up straighter, hold our heads up higher, and walk taller.

Doris, our church Outreach Leader, is a wonderful example of someone who edifies with her every word. She’s ninety years old now and a former principal. When she makes a request, you cannot say “no” because her words give you the confidence to complete any task. She builds you up spiritually and emotionally. I’ve never heard her say anything negative about anyone. All of the commendations she, herself, has received have never kept her from affirming everyone she meets. She catches people serving well and commends them for their efforts.

How did she acquire this wisdom concerning the power of positive words? She told me her mother said, “Doris, always remember to treat people like you would like to be treated.”

“I know how I felt when people treated me badly,” Doris added. “When you appreciate others, it makes you happy,” she reminded me.

Can we emulate Doris’ powerful words? We can, but first we must examine our message. We must be consciously aware of every syllable we utter. We must drop our negativity, and give thanks for the opportunity to make a difference with our words. Instead of belittling, painful words, ours can be uplifting and healing. What words are acceptable in God’s eyes? What words can we use that make those around us “glad”? What types of words can we use that will revitalize hurting hearts?

**Encouraging words** lift our spirits. Encourage means “to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope.” Words of encouragement spur others on to use their latent potential to achieve greater goals than they had ever imagined. Whenever we walk through a lonely difficult season, God will answer our plea of “God, please send someone to let me know You care.” Invariably we will receive a call or note from someone who has empathy and loving concern for us. Words do have the power to breathe life back into our souls.

**Affirming words** validate us. They illicit a big “Yes,” and confirm that we are truly appreciated for who we are. They inspire confidence. They empower us to face the world. We can shout out, “I am proud to be me.” We hear from others, “You are valued.”

**Comforting words** warm our hearts. When our hearts are breaking, and we are filled with grief, God says, “I will comfort you.” And we cry out, “May your unfailing love be my comfort” (Psalm 119:76 NIV). He sends soft and comforting words through compassionate, sympathetic friends and family whose words ease the pain.
Sunny words bring a smile to our faces. They brighten our day. They lighten our mood and create a ray of hope in our darkness. When someone says, “I’m so happy to see you,” it makes us feel loved. An exuberant child jabbering about his new toy makes our day worth living. Joyful words of a song make us want to worship and lift our hands in praise to God.

Loving words complete us. God is love, and He sent His Son, the Word, to speak life and love to us. We feel treasured when we are loved. “I love you” in its true form is God’s love spoken through our words.

Words are powerful! Our callous, spiteful words can be heart-rending, but we can speak life through words of love. We can emulate others who speak positive, uplifting words with liberality. Using Christ’s example of breathing life into hearts by His loving words of grace, should be our mission. We can use God’s powerful words to encourage, affirm, comfort, and spread joy and love to everyone we meet.

Prayer:

Father God, Forgive me for my outspoken, thoughtless words that cut and rend hearts. Only You can tame the tongue, so set a guard over my mouth. Remind me to use my lips to speak comforting, affirming words.

When I see someone weighed down with anxiety and pain, please help me to speak life and love to them using Your powerful words.

Questions:

1. How has your life been affected by words you have heard or spoken?

2. What kind of words did you use today? What words should we use that will be acceptable to God?

3. Do you know someone who speaks words of gladness? How can you emulate them?

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The Power of Words

Weaponizing the Dictionary

by Ron Gallagher

Words present a unique and challenging paradox. While they are sometimes profound in their strength, at other times, when called upon to express something deeply moving, they prove themselves to be almost insulting in their impotence. Words can be treated as vitally important or considered as little more than the garnish on a plate, valued for appearance but never intended to nourish the recipient.

The Scope and Power of Words ~

The scope of territory that words can encompass and the power they can wield are immense. They can lay hold of concepts as expansive as the universe itself and expose them in ways that fill us with inexpressible awe. In many cases, words define the difference between hope and despair, establishing the basis for who will live and who will die. Words have served as tools by which men have awakened the passions and strengthened the resolve needed to rise up and carve nations out of chaos. But at other times, words have become a malignant virus that so undermined the foundations and weakened the spirit of a people that nations, once great and powerful, descended into chaos.

Given their potential for either beneficial or aggressive application, perhaps we should handle our words with the same care we use when handling weapons. Firearms, for example, are simply “unbiased” devices with no will of their own. Guns are as willing to serve the murderous gangster as they are the protective police officer or the private citizen defending his or her home. Guns bring the same capacity to do good or evil through the hands of whomever holds them. Guns also have other uses, such as hunting edible wildlife to provide food, or for competitive contests and personal recreation sports like skeet shooting. Guns come in all kinds, sizes, shapes, and power potential and can be configured for applications ranging from military combat to Olympic competition.
A Point of Agreement ~

Both those who love guns and those who hate them generally agree on at least one point. With their unquestioned power to project destructive force, to handle them with frivolous disregard for their potential would be foolishly irresponsible. Words that men have unleashed on one another have left a trail of violence, bloodshed, and human debris that all the guns ever made cannot equal. The Scriptures have warned us repeatedly that the words we so easily speak can become weapons that carry the same kind of painful potential.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. (Psalm 55:21 NKJV)

My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. (Psalm 57:4)

Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows — bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the blameless; suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear. (Psalm 64:2-4)

We don’t usually think of our dictionary as an arsenal full of potential weapons, but we might think differently if we revisit a confrontation that took place in the very beginning of our long and bloody history. When the devil invaded the Garden of Eden, intent upon destroying all of humanity, he carried no physical weapon. He had nothing with which to threaten Eve with physical harm. Instead, he confronted the “mother of all living” with the only weapon he needed — words. He assaulted her with words that first questioned, and then contradicted, the words that her Creator and Provider had spoken. Eve embraced the rebellious ideas that the devil’s words conveyed and then took his weaponized sentences to her husband. She convinced him to accept them as she had done, and to eat the forbidden fruit. When he did, the human race appeared doomed forever. But thankfully, there were more powerful words yet to come and God soon revealed that the devil didn’t own the dictionary.

The Word that Overcomes ~

Satan may have claimed victory as he ushered death into God’s perfect world, but he surely must have trembled as a baby’s cry rose up from a stable in Bethlehem. The lies, the deceitful “words,” that led to the sins that filled the world with pain and death were doomed as Grace and Truth came to life in that stable. As air found its way into sinless human lungs, the omnipotent Word of God “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Satan’s lies were defeated forever on Calvary’s cross, and an empty tomb validated the promise Jesus made to us all in the words He spoke to Martha,

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. (John 11:25-26)

Faith alone stands as the basis for our personal redemption and our means of overcoming the relentless encroachment of the world’s value system. God refers us to two things that provide the unshakeable foundation for that faith, the deeds He has done and the words He has spoken. As Jesus declared to Phillip,

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. (John 14:11)
When Jesus had paid the awful price required for our salvation, He sent those who followed Him into the world to carry on His mission of confronting the devil’s lies and contradicting ideas that pervert God’s design and end in disappointment and death. He equipped those men and women and armed them for the battle with the very same weapons He used, a life empowered by His Spirit and words that offer love, hope, healing, redemption, and restoration.

We have at our disposal a veritable dictionary full of weapons that can overcome the destructive ideas flooding our atmosphere every day. The lies and twisted philosophies that the world system promotes can only be victorious if lives that contradict them never shine, and the words that overcome them are never spoken. The dictionary is just a book until we use its contents to reveal and communicate the ideas lying dormant inside. Our Bible is just a book until we bring its words to life in ways that others can see and hear.

Prayer:

Father, Help us to handle our words with the same care that we might handle a weapon that has potential for good or harm. Let us not be frivolous or irresponsible while using them. May we receive Your powerful words and build our lives on them in ways that others can see. May we carry them forward into the world around us and nourish it with the words of eternal life and love.

Questions:

1. In Matthew 4:4, what place of importance does Jesus give the words of God?

2. According to these verses in Psalm 119, how does God’s word benefit us?
   v.9, 11, 25, 28, 74, 93, 101, 105, 130, 133, and 165

3. What does the arsenal of God’s word in James 4:7, tell us to do about the enemy’s tactics against us?

4. In 2 Kings 19:14-16, what did Hezekiah do with the enemy’s words?

5. In Psalm 119:133, how can we bring the words of the Bible to life in ways that others can see and hear? In Matthew 7:24, 26?

6. What warnings does Scripture give us about the power of words in Colossians 2:4, Romans 16:18, 2 Peter 2:3, and Jude 1:16?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NKJV.
M y life changed when I became a runner.

Despite the immense health benefits of exercise, the biggest draw of running for me was so I could outrun my inner critic.

In fact, my whole life I’ve suffered from self-loathing. A voice filled my head with incessant chatter:

“You’re not good enough.”

“You thighs are too fat.”

“You shouldn’t have said that. You sounded stupid.”

During my college years, the voice pummeled my spirit until I could no longer stand up under the heavy blows, and depression ensued. However as I aged, the critic enmeshed himself in the fabric of my life. He was as commonplace as brushing my teeth, and I hardly noticed that I listened to his every word.

(Enter a pastime of running.)

As I ran further and further (I’m a distance runner), I realized that I could drop the critic. Fatigue overcame me, and I needed everything inside me to keep moving forward. Everything.

And, the critic’s voice stopped.

On the roads, I found freedom! I could escape from my own self-talk. Because that’s really who the critic was ... he was me, my negative self-talk.

You don’t need to run to improve your inner monologue. A decade later, I’ve come to know my worth in God. But knowing isn’t enough. My tendency (and maybe yours, too) is to lean toward the path of negative self-talk.
How can we overcome this? Let’s look at three examples.

1. “You’re not good enough.”

I don’t have to worry about being “good enough” because Jesus was good enough in my place. Hallelujah! And, because of His sacrifice, I know with certainty that I am loved beyond all limits (a love I could never deserve and which will never wane).

Reading God’s Word on a daily basis is a good start to fortifying a foundation based on God’s love. It may seem like an oversimplified solution, however, the benefit is real. No one learns Spanish by practicing once a year or even once a week. You have to be “in” the topic to absorb and understand it.

When you spend time in the Bible, focus on what God says about His children. Highlight any area you come across which speaks about who God says you are. Or better yet, memorize a few key verses. When you feel your negative critic coming to life, go back and read the highlighted verses. Contrary to how you may feel, the critic isn’t right. God loves His children, and He always will.

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)

2. “Your thighs are too fat.”

Comparison is death. Now, I may have big thighs (as I said, I’m an endurance runner), but compared to whom? Who sets the standard? God? I never found that passage in the Bible.

Do you want to tone down negative self-talk? Then maybe we need to limit what we put in front of our faces. Social media and television paint unrealistic pictures of what we should look like and who we should strive to be.

Take an Instagram holiday for a month, choosing to read inspirational books or even fiction. There are other ways to “veg out” without feeding the critic. Substitute a useful and practical TV show for The Bachelor (you get the idea).

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27 ESV)

3. “You shouldn’t have said that. You sounded stupid.”

Why, oh, why do we care so much about what others think? A lot of negative self-talk comes from imagining what others think about us. If I put forth the effort into my writing craft that I do into worrying about what others think, I’d have published a dozen books by now!

Listen, people will love you or they won’t. Basing how you feel about yourself on how others treat you is a recipe for disaster. People are fallible. Honestly, “they” are probably too busy worrying about how “they” look to think about you at all.
Spend time noticing your strengths, and make a list in a journal. Even if you can only find a few things you like about yourself (it gets easier over time), write those down and say a prayer of thanks. Do this on a daily basis to grow your positive self-talk.

*The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.* (Proverbs 29:25 ESV)

Here are a couple of things to remember. First, God loves you and sees your innate value. Second, to silence negative self-talk and grow a positive inner monologue, we need to be intentional about what we feed our minds and which thoughts we choose to dwell on. It takes practice, and it won’t happen overnight. But, you are worthy. You are beautiful. You have great value. Take some time to discover what God already sees in you.

**Prayer:**

Dear Lord, Through our personal sin nature and the sin nature of the world, I’ve developed a skewed view of who You created me to be. Please show me who I am to You. Reveal how You see me, Father. Help me to stand up in who You’ve called me to be; give me the strength and the vision to be accountable yet shame free. Be present in my life and help me to continually rely on You when my negative self-talk rears its head. I pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Questions:**

1. In your quiet time, think about your most common negative self-talk comments. Where is your greatest area of struggle?

2. What kinds of events or remarks aggravate and escalate that struggle?

3. Which verses in God’s word silence the negative self-talk and give you peace in that area?

4. Take a moment to read Psalm 139.
   a. What does it mean in v.14 (NKJV) to be “fearfully and wonderfully made”?
   b. How does that reflect on our Creator?
   c. How should it help our self-talk?

5. God views His children as “co-heirs” with Christ (Romans 8:17). How does this compare and contrast with your view of self?

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Following my testimony at church, Cindy called one Sunday night to inquire about the Bible study I had written, *Confronting Cancer with Faith*, thinking it might help her mom. I knew Cindy from church because her name was on the prayer list. She was dealing with a vascular problem in which she almost lost her leg. In the midst of the conversation I learned Cindy was also dealing with something else: childlessness. Infertility was not the issue; she had experienced two miscarriages. She was told her autoimmune disorder would make it difficult to carry a child to full-term, yet she persevered only to discover the doctors were right.

Children of God

The thought of Hannah and Sarah in the Bible crossed my mind while talking with my new friend. Both barren women traveled the same hopeful path. Both women loved the Lord and appealed for His mercy, and both women were ridiculed for their childlessness.

Hannah was a woman of grace and devout prayer. Her experience and the scorn from her husband’s second wife Peninnah, who boasted of her children, helped mold Hannah’s character and faith. She vowed to give God back the thing she wanted most: a child (1 Samuel 1:9-11). God answered her prayer and granted her a son who would become a great judge and prophet.

Sarah would become the mother to the Jewish nation (Isaiah 51:2). Her pregnancy was delayed so that the glory of God could be exalted, but Sarah wasn’t concerned about God’s glory like Hannah.

Sarah wanted to build a family with Abraham (Genesis 16:2). She knew of God’s promise to her husband to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:2), but she had not been specifically identified as the mother of that great nation (though it could be assumed). Maybe God had other plans. So she gave her Egyptian slave to her husband as a wife, which was legal in that day. Hagar conceived and bore a son, but this was not God’s plan. How many times do we get ahead of ourselves trying to rush God’s plan?

Unlike Hannah, Sarah showed impatience, disobedience, and distrust. She laughed at the possibility of conception at her advanced age. Her doubtful response prompted God to ask her husband,
“Is anything impossible for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14 HCSB). I found myself asking Cindy the same question. The Bible answers it—“Nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37 HCSB)—but do we believe God will do the impossible for us?

**God’s Ways, God’s Timing**

Cindy and I became fast friends and spent hours on the phone. On one occasion I told her I felt the Lord wanted her to be a mother. How could I say such compelling words? Because they weren’t just words; I believed them. I believed God’s plan included a child for my friend.

When Cindy called to say she was pregnant again, we were ecstatic and celebrated over lunch on the day of her ultrasound. This new life seemed to be the answer to our prayers.

For the next several months, Cindy called to give periodic updates and to thank me for my prayers and encouragement. Then one evening she called to say she had lost the baby. A third miscarriage. I cringed when she thanked me for allowing her to fall in love with this unborn child. We cried together and wondered how this could happen. Still, I couldn’t shake the idea that God wanted Cindy to be a mother.

“You will be a mother,” I said.

Adoption seemed to be the next logical step. Cindy and Scott decided to resurrect the notion they had previously pursued with skepticism. All was proceeding painstakingly slowly including a home visit, when Cindy received devastating news: she might have breast cancer. Adoption seemed out of the question. Options were exhausted. Maybe it wasn’t cancer. I maintained my confidence and conviction for motherhood but prayed with fervor that Cindy’s biopsy results would be negative. This was not to be the case. What now, God?

I reminded Cindy (and myself) that God can do the impossible. I was surprised at the empowerment and demonstration of faith from my words. They were exactly what she needed to hear. I realized what I had said and hoped I had not projected a false sense of optimism. So what if I had? Was that so bad? God’s Word is Truth, and I was verbalizing my faith to lean upon its promises.

Later that night I retreated for some heart-to-heart abandoned prayer time. I pleaded with God to give the Darnell’s a child somehow, someway. In my heart I felt it would happen but had no idea how. I didn’t have to!

Cindy and Scott withdrew advancements towards adoption, allowing Cindy’s health to take priority. She opted for a mastectomy with reconstruction and had the surgery in the hospital where she worked as a Labor and Delivery nurse.

A few days later I received a phone call at work. Scott’s message was short and energized.

“Pray, pray, pray,” he said.

A young woman had come into the hospital emergency room about to deliver and inquired if there was anyone that wanted a
baby. One of the employees from Labor and Delivery was quick to answer.

“Yes, I know someone,” she said.

She contacted Cindy who was still an inpatient. Of course, she was interested. Could this be the miracle, the impossible thing we’d been waiting for? Yes, yes it was. It was indeed. Who could have imagined such an incredible, remarkable, unmistakable God thing?

I came back to the hospital the next day to meet Miles Morrison Darnell. A few weeks later I attended his adoption at the courthouse. Birthday parties and Christmases have come and gone as I’ve watched Miles grow into a handsome young man. He looks nothing like his parents but has the smile of God upon his life.

Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life (refrain from the hymn “Wonderful Words of Life” by Philip Bliss) were used to speak life into a difficult situation. We know God does not call for all married women to have children, but God does call each of us to trust Him. Completely and wholly and at all times. Are you able to trust Him and His ways in your life?

Prayer:

Dear Father, Your Word is true; however, sometimes we have a difficult time leaning on Your promises in the midst of our circumstances. Help us, Lord, call upon You and to trust in Your ways to do what is best for us in the plan You have. Strengthen our obedience. In Your name I pray, Amen.

Questions:

1. How did not getting what she wanted, affect Hannah? How did it affect Sarah?
2. Are you usually inclined to one or the other?
3. Have you ever come alongside someone struggling with an impossible situation? If so, what helped?
4. How does it affect our relationship with Him, when “Nothing will be impossible with God” becomes our reality?
5. How should we handle it when the impossible thing that we are hoping for, is not God’s will for us?
6. What are some wonderful words of life spoken to you by a teacher, friend, or loved one?

Karen O. Allen has a passion for music, ministry, and dogs. Recently retired from cancer research, she maintains her position as an organist. Her Bible study Confronting Cancer with Faith (www.confrontingcancerwithfaith.com) has brought hope around the world. Connect with Karen on her new Ewe Blessed Ministries blog (www.ewerblessed.com/blog) that highlights everyday and unexpected blessings.
Atta girl! You can make it. Keep going!”

The first grader huffed out a breath, clenched her teeth and steadily continued her crunches (sit-ups) as the stop watch raced forward on its sixty-second count.

“You’re almost there!” I urged, counting her repetitions as I pressed gently to hold her feet. She grunted on each upward surge as she maintained a steady rhythm of up and down.

“Stop! Times up.” I shut off the watch.

She collapsed onto her back, but immediately rose again to a sitting position, eyes aglow with fierce anticipation. “Did I get enough?”

“Yes.” I smiled as her face lit up like a burst of sunlight following a summer rainstorm.

“My Daddy’s going to be so proud!” She jumped to her feet, gave me a hug, and sped back to her classroom.

Carrie qualified for the President’s Challenge Physical Fitness Award. This hard-working, highly motivated student had previously breezed through the mile run, flexibility test, pull-ups, and shuttle run, scoring above the 85th percentile.

But sit-ups had defeated her.

Encouragement (giving support, offering confidence and hope) made the difference for Carrie. This sweet creation of God received a second chance, and her willingness to try again brought success to this determined six-year-old.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV)

Our words are powerful. And most certainly, words of parents, teachers, and extended family wield tremendous force as we encourage (or discourage) our children. Little ones thrive on affirmation of their achievements and recognition of milestones of growth. Setting challenges suitable to the child’s age and abilities and providing positive feedback, fosters further learning and leads to healthy intrinsic motivation (from within) to succeed.
Encouragement is not limited to children; we have ample opportunities to encourage (or discourage) our family, friends, and co-workers on a regular basis. Affirmation for a job well done or encouragement for ongoing attempts impacts how we grow, develop, and succeed.

Encouragement builds positive self-esteem and the confidence and initiative to keep trying. Children and adults thrive on positive reinforcement or, as the Apostle Paul would say, “build each other up.”

But what if we’re not encouraged?

My earthly father was often harsh, demanding, and critical. His verbal attacks pumped fear into the hearts of his children and robbed them of self-confidence. He was not an encourager.

Perhaps his parenting style was a carryover from his own father. My dad lived through the depression and survived the European Campaign of World War II. He had demons of his own to deal with. I suppose that he loved me, but he didn’t know how to show it. As a result, I became an overachiever, a perfectionist, impatient with my own weaknesses and those of others. My ability to be an encouraging teacher, wife, parent, and friend is the result of my mother’s love and God’s grace in healing me from the lingering pain of my father’s verbal discouragement.

Words of discouragement are powerful in shaping our sense of who we are. Excessive negative verbal feedback can cause fear, anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. The Word of God is firm about negative behaviors we should avoid.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31–32)

If we avoid malice and slander and are kind and compassionate in our verbal and non-verbal communication (body language), then we will be encouragers.

The Psalmist reminds us that using our words for good is in accordance to God’s will. Our verbal interactions with (or about) others should be positive. We should avoid words which might cause harm.

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. (Psalm 34:12–16)

Jesus provides a positive role model for us. He often took on the role of teacher and mentor in His ministry. Our Lord demonstrated the importance of encouragement in His relationship with His disciples. His living example and guidance during His time on Earth enabled the apostles to carry on the work of spreading the Gospel after Jesus ascended into heaven.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all
nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Jesus reminded His disciples (and we are included) that He is always with us. Through His teaching, encouragement, and confidence in His disciples, Christ equipped them “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Encouraging our children, family, fellow church members, colleagues, and peers builds them up to work for our Lord. Our words of affirmation, support, and encouragement spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and influence others to live as children of God.

My young student grew into a confident, well-adjusted, wonderful young lady. She flourished in academics and athletics. She served many years as a teacher and now has children of her own.

I cannot take credit for her success, but I know the Power of Words, as utilized by teachers and parents, contributes significantly to the development of our children. I believe that our words and actions, in all cases, have tremendous impact on others. I will always remember Carrie's joy when she successfully achieved the fitness goal she had set for herself. She wanted to please her earthly father—and she did. Now Carrie pleases her heavenly Father as she serves as a positive and encouraging role model in her church, to her own children, and to others.

I believe our Father is proud of her.

As children of God, is our heavenly Father proud of us for our positive and encouraging attitude? Are we using the power of our words and actions to encourage others in their walk with Christ?

**Prayer:**

Father, I know I’ve been guilty of using my words inappropriately. Sometimes, I’ve discouraged Your children rather than encouraged. I pray as the Psalmist did: May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:14). Lord, please guide me to be an encourager in my words and actions, that I may serve You by serving Your children. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

**Questions:**

1. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of building up one another (2 Corinthians 10:8 and 13:10; Ephesians 4:12). Building up can be considered encouragement. What does building up look like in action? What specific words and actions have you found to be the most encouraging to others?

2. The opposite of building up can come in many forms. Using the guidelines of Ephesians 4:31-32 and other Scriptural guidance, what are the behaviors that we should avoid in order to avoid being the perpetrator of discouragement?
3. Our children, grandchildren, and peers are strongly impacted by our words and examples. How can we model encouragement for them? Since none of us are perfect, how can we let those who are watching, learn from our mistakes?

4. Proverbs 12:25 reminds us that—“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.” What strategies can we use to encourage and cheer others when they are anxious and afraid? Can you share an example of when someone encouraged you? Or how you have encouraged others?

5. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). How does sharing encouragement in a loving manner to others fit into God’s purpose for us?

Notes: Carrie is not her real name.
All Scripture verses are taken from the NIV.

Katherine M. Pasour is an author, teacher, and speaker with a passion for wellness—her own and for others! She seeks to nurture children and adults of all ages to achieve and maintain better health. Her Bible studies focus on developing a closer relationship with Jesus while working toward making choices that will lead to a healthier lifestyle. Connect with her at https://www.katherinepasour.com.
I had the wrong side, I turned it over with one hand and tried again. Nothing. I had no choice but to drive up the incline. Relieved that I made it, I put the car in park and looked at my hand. I was holding a box of breath mints. Imagine that—trying to open the garage door with a box of breath mints. We often see that in our communication. We use the wrong tools.

We know a better response to a sarcastic or angry remark is silence or kindness, but in a moment of frustration we choose a cutting comment or an angry tone. A conversation rapidly deteriorates and perhaps a friendship disintegrates. We know it would be wise to wait before addressing a misunderstanding, but we blurt out a defensive retort. We are short on patience and offer a quick answer rather than take time to give an explanation.

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV) reminds us, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Just as breath mints don’t open garage doors and garage door openers don’t conceal bad breath, unwholesome talk doesn’t yield positive results. So how do we avoid going to the box of breath mints when we need a garage door opener? What can we do to store and retrieve wholesome, life-giving words?

Managing our words begins with a Christ-centered heart. "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:10-11 NIV).

As we seek God through prayer and His Word, our quest for a discerning heart will help us select our words. When we pray for His heart to become ours, we want to give up negative communication habits.

“I have hidden your word in my heart.” The Hebrew word “hidden” means to treasure or hide.¹ In the book of Exodus (2:2), Jochebed hid baby Moses to protect him from being killed. That is the same word used in this passage, implying we should protect and treasure God’s Word so it frames the words we speak and guides us to make right choices. If we have hidden God’s Word in our hearts, we will move away from careless words and move toward cautious ones, from unkind to enriching, from gossip to silence. We will choose wholesome, healthy words to benefit another.

Using healthy words, like using the garage door opener instead of a box of breath mints, allows communication to lift others up. Our speech changes from the insensitive to the sensitive, from the impulsive and careless to the restrained and thoughtful. We no longer resort to using negative and unwholesome communication such as criticism, complaining, flattery, sarcasm, negativity, and exaggeration. Think about the times you used or heard those kinds of words. Did they nourish you, or, as our Scripture says, build you or others up? When we develop a heart that honors God, we will have a mouth that honors Him. It means finding and using the “remote” at the right time in the right way.

Do you remember words spoken to you by parents, teachers, friends, or co-workers? Weren’t they powerful in some way? If they were positive, you were encouraged; if negative, perhaps you still recall
When we greet each other, we say hello, hi, or good morning. Tibetans greet one another with the expression, “Tashi delee,” which means, “I honor the greatness that is within you.” As we manage our words, we honor God and the greatness in others as image-bearers of God. To do this:

- we begin with the foundation of a Christ-centered heart,
- we recognize the influence and impact of our words, and
- we recognize that God's power can help us develop habits that honor Him.

In her book, *Words Begin in Our Hearts*, Rhonda Rizzo Webb says, “You can never go wrong if you will seek in every word, in every statement, in every response, to glorify your Father in heaven. As you do this, His character—truthful, kind, gentle, forgiving, compassionate, patient, and humble—will be vibrantly displayed in you.”

As we walk through our day, let’s carefully select the right tools and the right timing. If we don’t, we are bound to spin our tires and get stuck in the icy accumulation of cold and hurtful words.
Prayer:

Father, I know words are powerful. May I learn to think and pause before I speak. Help me to access Your power to be a positive influence and encouragement in my communication. Like the psalmist said, my desire is that "the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14 NIV). Amen.

Questions:

1. What have past conversations taught you about word tools to use or to avoid?

2. Read Psalm 141:3, Colossians 3:12-14, James 1:19-20, and 2 Peter 1:3. Can you make any of these verses a prayer?

3. Add to this list of opposite categories of words: joy vs. negativity, complaining vs. gratitude, flattery vs. compliments. How do these words influence us?


by Dorcas Asercion Zuniga

"Can you say something to make me feel better?"

My baby sister would always ask me that whenever she was going through a rough time. So we would have a sister-to-sister, heart-to-heart session that would end up with both of us feeling comforted and loved.

It’s amazing how the right words, at just the right time, can make all the difference in a person’s day—or even life.

Such was the case for my mother. She had left her home country, the Philippines, with three young children to join my dad in the United States. With no family nearby, she was desperately homesick. She told us about those days when we got older and about the physician who treated her. She said just talking to him made her
feel better. His care and compassion healed the underlying cause of her physical ailments—her lonely heart.

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.” (Proverbs 12:25 NIV)

Solomon writes about the right words spoken at the right time: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11 NKJV).

By definition, “fitly” is an adverb that means “in a fit manner; at the right time.” A fitly spoken word is suitable for the occasion. Such a word is as beautiful as golden apples in a silver basket.

Our Savior Yeshua was Master of the spoken word. For every circumstance, He knew what to say and how to say it, in order to get the attention of His listeners.

“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips” (Luke 4:22). “They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority” (Luke 4:32).

Words are powerful. How they are used determines what type of impact they make.

Most of us grew up reciting variations of the expression, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never harm me.” This saying is meant to empower children to rise above hurtful remarks made against them. But the fact is, words do hurt. However, the right words can do the opposite.

Words can heal.

“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” (Proverbs 16:24)

Throughout history, honey has been used for medicinal purposes in many cultures, and modern science has confirmed the great benefits of this sweet golden liquid. Among its many properties is its ability to heal wounds and burns. So it is no wonder that Solomon likens gracious words—words that are “courteous, kind, and pleasant”—to the honeycomb. Where hurtful words can “break,” kind words can heal.

Many times I walk into an exam room to be greeted by hurting souls. After lots of tissues and hand-holding, words of reassurance, and often times, prayers, the quivering lips turn into smiles. My patients would offer words like, “I knew I would feel better after talking to you,” or “Thank you so much; you always know what to say.” Each time this happens, I think back to my mother and her physician from long ago. I am humbled and blessed to be used as an instrument of Divine comfort.

In the Book of Matthew, Yeshua spoke, and the centurion’s servant was healed (Matthew 8:5-13). Through the power of His words, the paralyzed man was able to walk (Matthew 9:2-8). Our words may not bring about physical healing, but, through the grace of the Great Physician, they can help mend broken hearts.

Words can encourage.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

I was painfully shy and insecure in middle school. During one English class in ninth grade, our teacher placed cards with different adjectives
when a sudden “furious storm” (Matthew 8:24) swept over their boat, the disciples frantically awakened the sleeping Yeshua. He “got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm” (Matthew 8:26). The Master of the “winds and the waves” will give us the right words to calm an angry soul—and that power can come through gentle words.

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Words can calm.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
(Proverbs 15:1)

It is truly amazing to see this Proverb in action. I’m ashamed to admit, however, that I was the one who needed that “gentle answer.” I had called the customer service department to cancel a subscription for a skincare product. The young man who answered, proceeded to speak while I was speaking and insisted on offering me a special deal to continue with the product. He refused to cancel my subscription. My anger and the volume of my voice rapidly increased. Finally, he hung up on me.

Oh no! That would not do. I promptly called back. A different voice came on the line. I complained about my earlier phone encounter. The young man on the other end apologized for my inconvenience and assured me that he would cancel my subscription. I could literally feel the tension in my head and neck dissipate. He got all the necessary information and thanked me for my patience. I, in turn, thanked him for his kind assistance and hung up, totally ashamed of my behavior.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, Help me to know what to say, whatever the situation, so that Your Name will be glorified. Let my words be uplifting and always pleasing to You.
Questions:

1. How have your words helped someone get through a difficult situation?

2. What advice or words of encouragement from others have spurred you to press on?

3. What advice or encouragement from Scripture has been especially meaningful and helpful to you?

4. What should guide our words and actions? (See Colossians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 13:1.)

*All Bible verses are taken from the NIV translation unless otherwise noted.
**Author’s Note: Yahweh is the divine name of our Heavenly Father, and Yeshua is the Hebrew name of Jesus. Thank you for letting me share these special names with you.
2. Ibid.

Dorcas Asercion Zuniga is a wife, mother and family medicine physician. She is thankful to Yahweh for gifting her with the opportunity to use her words, both written and verbal, to bring encouragement and hope to others. Visit her at thezunigajourney.wordpress.com and www.dorcaszuniga.com.

Of Butter and War, Oil and Swords
by Mary Albers Felkins

His talk is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart; his words are more soothing than oil, yet they are drawn swords. (Psalm 55:21 NIV)

I don’t consider myself a violent person. Disclaimer: If my stash of Peanut M&Ms® goes missing, I am known to get downright testy but never violent.

I’ve never considered taking anyone’s life by sword, though I own a Smith & Wesson and pepper spray for purposes of self-defense. With great respect for those called to serve our country,
I've never had any inkling to join the military. Aside from the study of our nation's history, I have little interest in things of war.

Tenderhearted toward the suffering, I cringe at violence. All it takes is about fifteen minutes of hearing the news and I'm out. My heart clenches and I get angry. Or sad. Why can't we all just be nice to one another and get along?

Why doesn't it start with … me?

Scripture reveals the deceitfulness of slick and buttery words and false flattery when the heart is contemplating harm. Or worse.

*Those who flatter their neighbors are spreading nets for their feet.* (Proverbs 29:5)

Are we spreading nets unaware? Worse, fully aware? Is the butter and oil of our speech a means to lure others to engage in godless warfare, the swords of our tongues drawn and ready?

The power and gift of words. By them, Jesus brought down the lofty (John 19:11), healed the sick (Matthew 8:13, plus countless other examples), silenced the storm (Mark 4:39), taught His followers (Matthew 5:1-12), and silenced the demons (Matthew 8:28-32). He always used words for the Father’s glory and for our good.

What God desires in the inmost part of our soul is truth, a transformation from the inside out.

David knew this:

*What you're after is truth from the inside out.* (Psalm 51:6 The Message)

And out of the overflow of the heart will flow … truth. *For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of* (Matthew 12:34).

**Points to Ponder:**

1. **Give thought to our thoughts.** At some point it’s likely those ramblings of our heart will spill over. Are we nursing resentment or praise? What will be the outcome if our thoughts are uttered? Will they bless or curse the receiver?

2. **Maintain humility.** A willingness to offer our words to God for holy editing first in order that they align with His heart will result in far better outcomes.

   *Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him, “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.”* (Hosea 14:2)

3. **Check our motives.** When we feel an overwhelming urge to say something, even a simple compliment or praise, it’s a good practice to stop and ask, “Why? What’s driving the urge?” Are we buttering up the listener for our own good? *May the LORD silence all*
flattering lips and every boastful tongue (Psalm 12:3). Or are we looking to engage in verbal warfare?

Given that nothing of our hearts is hidden from Him and He’s in on every conversation, let’s use the gift and power of words He’s entrusted us with for the good of the hearer.

Let’s pray…

May these words of my (our) mouth and this meditation of my (our) heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my (our) Rock and my (our) Redeemer.

(Psalm 19:14)

Questions:

1. Which of the Points to Ponder do you think would be the most effective in making you a good steward of the gift and power of words? Why?

2. What would it look like to apply these points at home? At work? At church? With friends? How would this be helpful?

3. Which of these Bible verses most inspires you to watch your words? To exercise humility in heated situations? To check your motives before you speak?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.

Mary Albers Felkins lives in the North Carolina foothills with her husband Bruce. They have four semi-adult children in their quiver. She can be lured from her writing cave with a party-sized bag of Peanut M&Ms® or an episode of Fixer Upper. In addition to her weekly blog at www.maryfelkins.com, she is an author of contemporary romance. Her first novel, Call To Love, is set in Hickory, North Carolina, and it is scheduled to be released in 2019.

Always on Your Lips: Giving Voice to Scripture

I had made an embarrassing mistake with one of my editing clients, one that would cost the new, talented author time and money. While mailing off the edited manuscript to his home in California, I forgot to insert the last three chapters in the envelope. Once we realized my error, it delayed our progress for about a week. I overnighted the pages and told my client that the express postage was on me.

His reply surprised me. “The postage is not on you. Mistakes happen. Love keeps no records of wrongs. Let me know the cost and we will handle it.”
I would recognize the phrase “love keeps no record of wrongs” anywhere. It’s a part of how Paul describes authentic, deep, Christ-like love to the early church in Corinth. Paul writes:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV, emphasis added)

Hearing that phrase extended to me as a gesture of forgiveness, was powerful. Not only did it make me feel appreciated and loved, it inspired me to keep Scripture on the tip of my tongue like he did, or on my fingertips when typing e-mails or writing letters.

God commanded this practice when He chose Joshua to replace Moses as the leader of the Israelites. He said, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8 NKJV, emphasis added).

Notice the purpose God gives for keeping His Word in our mouths—“that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.” The underlying goal is obedience, which pleases our loving Father and sets our lives on the right track.

Also notice God’s call to “Meditate in it day and night.” Scripture may be unforgettable, but important nuggets of truth can be overlooked when we don’t take the time to stop and reflect. As a result, God’s commandments—or promises that help us obey with joy—will be glossed over. Because we live on this side of the cross, we benefit from even more godly insights than the Israelites knew in Joshua’s day. Using God’s Word and applying those many truths, though, requires dedication.

Keeping Scripture on our lips doesn’t come naturally. In conversations with others, it’s difficult to mention a passage that applies to the situation at hand when we only recall snippets. The same applies to passages we need to silently recall in our minds to help guide our behavior.

Memorizing verses can help ensure we’re always ready. One of my favorite strategies is to write out useful verses on index cards. If I’m feeling crafty, I use colorful pens or add stickers. Simply writing out the verses on plain index cards, a Word document, or a handwritten page of paper would do the trick just as well.

We may also hesitate to keep Scripture in our mouths because others may find us odd or overly religious. Yet these people may not yet be familiar with the refreshment that the Bible provides or may assume that the Scriptures are only filled with rules and regulations. Giving them a taste of Scripture may help correct these common misconceptions. For believers and unbelievers alike, Scripture can bring comfort in a way that earthly words cannot.
On many occasions, my outlook has changed for the better when loved ones have pointed me to God’s Word.

- Once when I was nervous about an upcoming mission trip, my friend Stef prayed with me aloud. “Father, I know You’ve sent her for such a time as this,” she said. My friend was referencing the story of Queen Esther, when her uncle Mordecai influenced her to make a bold request to the king to save the Jewish people: “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14 NKJV, emphasis added). My friend’s words reminded me that I, like Esther, was tasked with an important purpose—one God planned long ago.

- Another time, I was going through a trial and my mom encouraged me with one of her favorite verses from Job: “You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by” (Job 11:16 NIV). I imagined myself standing on a peaceful bridge, watching a river flow gently beneath me, the waters never to return. It reminded me that no trial, however big it seems, will last forever. Someday our sufferings will be a distant memory.

Scripture is too powerful, too influential, and too beautiful to be confined to Sunday mornings. It should always be in our mouths, and not just with ourselves and fellow churchgoers. When we speak Scripture, it gives others a sample of God’s Word, leaving them wanting more. It is “alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 NIV).

The words of this world are often dry, empty, or worse. God’s Word strikes the ear differently. Like springs in the desert, it seems refreshingly foreign. Just as it did for an embarrassed editor like me.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, Thank You for the power, healing, and hope I find abundantly in Your Word. Help me keep Scripture at the forefront of my mind and inscribe it more firmly on the tablet of my heart. Allow it to overflow from my lips in many situations, even the everyday, to encourage myself and those around me to know You and obey You more. In Jesus’ name, Amen.
Questions:

1. What are three passages of Scripture that you turn to again and again?

2. How can you work them into everyday conversation with fellow believers?

3. How can you slip them into conversations with those who don't know Christ?

4. When can you use Scripture on rarer occasions, such as celebrations or tragedies?

5. In what types of situations is it useful to remind yourself of Scripture?

6. What strategies could help you remember verses better?

Lauren Craft believes God gives each of His children a purpose, and fulfilling that mission is one of the greatest joys we can experience before reaching our eternal home. Lauren has worked as a journalist for ten years, aided in Bible translation, and shared her hope in Jesus Christ in the U.S. and abroad. Her writings have appeared in the books Breaking the Chains (Lighthouse Bible Studies), Just Breathe (Worthy), and Let the Earth Rejoice (Worthy). You can connect with her at www.sharpeyeedits.net.

I can’t do it. I will never be good enough. God can’t use me. I am not smart enough, talented enough, or popular enough. These are words we often say to ourselves that hinder our ability to be used by God. Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV) says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” The words we choose to speak to ourselves promote life or death.

Speaking life to ourselves involves encouraging ourselves to believe we can effectively be and do what God desires. It includes knowing that we are valuable to God and those around us. On the other hand, speaking “death” to ourselves is thinking and believing discouraging words. These words often promote timidity, fearfulness, and hopelessness. Words of death produce a negative self-image and lead to defeat.
We can know what we think of ourselves by listening to the words we speak. If we believe we are valuable, we will speak and think positive statements about ourselves. If we have no sense of self-worth, we will use negative statements. Each of us has great value to God. He loves us and desires intimate fellowship with us. We must learn to internalize how God feels about us. If the words or thoughts that we speak about ourselves do not agree with God’s Word, they are not truth. They are lies that promote some form of death in our lives. We must learn to conform both our inner and outer speech to the Word of God.

Throughout our lives people have spoken both encouraging and discouraging words to us. These words seem to get recorded in our minds, and we begin speaking them to ourselves in our thought lives. Encouraging words that have become ingrained in our thoughts build us up and spur us on to good works. They become a source of positivity that amplifies our abilities. On the other hand, discouraging words sown in our lives often take root and sprout negative self-feelings. Dwelling on them promotes death, and every situation becomes clouded by our adverse thinking. Negative self-talk deters the work that God wants to do in us and through us. Proverbs 12:25 says, “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” Anxiety caused by the negative self-talk may depress us, but learning to speak positive words will revive us.

Learn to Speak Life

1. The first step to silencing these self-defeating words is to recognize them. Often we have believed these words so long that they become a habitual pattern of thinking. We become desensitized and unaware of the damage we inflict on ourselves. We must take away their power. God’s voice is never discouraging or defeating. We need to refuse to listen to voices that do not agree with God.

2. Once we recognize discouraging words, we must reject them. It helps to understand that Satan, the father of all lies, is often the instigator of these negative thoughts. We can identify them as lies, renounce them, and refuse to be ruled by them. As soon as we identify a thought as discouraging, we should say, “No, that is not true!” In doing this we will train ourselves to reject negative thinking.

3. Finally, we must replace negative words with words of life. We find life-giving affirmations in God’s Word. Psalm 19:14 says, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD.” The meditation of our hearts is our thinking. Like the Psalmist, we should pray to be enabled to think pleasing thoughts about ourselves. Our self-thought will please God when it agrees with His Word. When we feel down or not good enough, we need to ask: What does God’s Word say? Who does God say that I am? What does God say I am able to do?

All of the words that we speak to ourselves need to be compared with Scripture. If they do not agree, we need to correct our thoughts and our speech. The only way to speak life into our lives is to speak His Word. We must learn what He says about us and speak those words in faith.

God’s Word effectively combats all negative self-talk. Searching the Scriptures for truth will help us defeat the lying words in our minds. When we think we can’t do something, God’s word says we “can do all
things through Christ” (Philippians 4:13). When we think we are not competent, God’s Word says, “Our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). God says we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) and “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Believing and speaking these words encourages and equips us to fulfill God’s plan for our lives.

Negative words and thoughts tend to increase when we are in a bad mood. Choosing to speak life-giving, positive words from the Bible will elevate our moods. Lack of motivation is defeated by Philippians 2:13: “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Loneliness is overcome by Hebrews 13:5: “He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Discouragement in ministry diminishes with Galatians 6:9: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

Positive self-talk will promote life and defeat death. How beautiful our self-talk will become when we learn to use it properly. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

Prayer:

Precious Heavenly Father, Thank You that You always speak uplifting words about me. Please, teach me to recognize and reject all negative thoughts I have of myself. Help me to replace these words that are consistent with what You say. Show me truths in Your Word that I need to affirm in my life. Teach me to speak and think only what will promote Your life in me. In the holy name of Jesus, Amen.

Questions:

1. Who speaks positive words to you? Negative words?
2. What are some negative thoughts you have of yourself?
3. What is the source of this negativity?
4. How will you break the habit of negative self-talk?
5. What will help you recognize and reject negative words?
6. What Scriptures will you use to replace them?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NKJV.

Karen Griffin enjoys challenging women to be transformed by the living Word. Having successfully homeschooled three children, she now encourages other women through mentoring and conference speaking. Her greatest desire is to help the bride of Christ make herself ready for His return (Rev 19:7). Learn with Karen at www.karengriffin.blog.
Hitting Pause on Words That Wound

by Lori Brown, Ed.D

When I reached the age of sixteen, I suddenly thought my parents knew nothing. Consequently, I became a moody and emotionally challenging teenager at times. One day I got angry with my mom. In haste, I yelled painful words, stomped down the hallway to my bedroom, and slammed the door. For the next few seconds, you could have heard a pin drop in that house, but that was only the calm before the storm. My dramatic exit was short-lived. I could continue with the rest of the story, but let’s just say that it’s not very pretty.

Before I could plot the next move, my mom had the bedroom door wide open and was standing at the foot of the bed with the reminder that we don’t “act that way” in the Brown household.

I could continue with the rest of the story, but let’s just say that it’s not very pretty. Before I could plot the next move, my mom had the bedroom door wide open and was standing at the foot of the bed with the reminder that we don’t “act that way” in the Brown household.

It didn’t take long to realize that my ugly words and disrespectful behaviors hurt my mother and damaged our healthy relationship. In short, I was an angry teenager who sinned and was sadly ignorant of the cost. Was trying to get my way worth the emotional pain of the damaging words I had so mercilessly thrown at my mother?

I think we can all agree that angry, hurtful, and disrespectful words have little place in the Kingdom, yet, they are frequently common, particularly in seasons of frustration. Disillusionment and hardship sometimes lead our lips and language to dark places, as it did in my childhood home almost thirty years ago.

We shouldn’t be surprised to find similarly dark instances throughout the Scriptures. In fact, the New International Version includes 270 uses of the word “anger” and 115 uses of “angry.” Why does this matter, you ask? Because even God’s people get angry, and anger often leads to sin. I think it’s fair to say that some of the Bible is a comprehensive biography of hurting people who often responded by hurting others with their weapons of words.

Let’s consider some historical examples, starting with Adam and Eve.

- In Genesis 3, Adam wounded his Creator with deceitful words—“I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10 NASB*). Did Adam honestly believe that God was clueless?

- Adam additionally wounded Eve with accusatory and blaming words—“The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’” (Genesis 3:12). Again, did Adam really believe what he was saying? Did he honestly believe that the blame game was going to deepen his commitment to Eve? For Adam, sin led to embarrassment, which then led to deceit and a willing spirit to hurt the two persons who comprised his whole world—God and Eve. But
Adam was just the first among many to act in a similar fashion. Consider:

- Peter publicly denied knowing Jesus ("Woman, I do not know Him" [Luke 22:57]).
- Elkanah’s second wife, Peninnah, mercilessly teased a barren Hannah (the first wife) to the point of tears (1 Samuel 1:6-8).
- The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus and called Him names as they tortured His body before the crucifixion (Matthew 27:29-31).

In each case, the loss of power, pride, position, or priority resulted in hurting people who hurt others with their words, despite the modeled behavior of a perfect Savior who lived out the commands of Ephesians 4. This beautiful New Testament passage reminds us of ways to hit pause.

- Avoid sinning in our anger (v.26).
- Keep our speech clean (v.29).
- Watch our words (v.31).

If Jesus was able to follow these commands, how do we follow suit? Or, to put it another way, how do we hit pause on words that wound?

Ironically, the best answer to that question is found in Jesus’ lack of words. As referenced in Matthew 27, when Jesus faced the greatest physical torture of His life, He uttered few words before Pilate and responded to each blow with silence. He met insults with intimate reflection and physical pain with a priestly patience.

As Jesus neared His final breath, His only words were directed toward the soul-seeking criminal at Calvary and to His Holy Father. In what could have been a Hollywood-worthy scene of deep rage, Jesus chose quiet reverence.

Difficult though it may be, you and I can choose to do the same. The best way to hit pause on words that wound, is to hold the tongue while directing our conflicted hearts and souls to the Father. Instead of harsh words, we can choose His healing. Instead of deceptive words, we can choose His directives, and instead of rash thought or deed, we can choose His redemption. Give your wounding words to the Savior today and watch Him work.

Prayer:

Dear God, I come to You today asking for wisdom with my words. Sometimes I speak without realizing how painful my
words may be to others. I want to honor You and reflect Your character, which means I need to exercise caution and compassion in all things. I pray for listening ears and a humble spirit so that my responses to others serve to build up rather than tear down the Kingdom. Guide me, Father God, with today’s words.

Questions:

1. Have you ever been wounded by the words of others? If so, how did God help you heal from that experience?

2. Why do you think it is so difficult to listen more than we speak?

3. When you reflect on the way Jesus responded to wounding words, how does it make you feel?

4. In addition to prayer and time in the Word, can you think of practical strategies to help you hit pause before speaking painful words?

5. How does knowing that the Bible is filled with stories of hurting people, impact your relationship with God today?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NASB.

In high school, I loaned a good friend my favorite blue skirt. She kept the skirt longer than I planned. I repeatedly asked for it back, but told her not to wash it because it was dry clean only. Just return it, so I could use it. Several months went by, and she finally handed over my skirt. When I hung it in the closet, I realized my skirt had shrunk. It was several inches shorter than when I gave it to her.

I was livid. I’d begged her repeatedly not to wash it, but it seemed she had. While still angry, I called to confirm my suspicions.

“Did you wash my skirt?” I yelled.

“Yes, I wanted it to be clean,” she responded.

“What did you say?”

“Did you put it in the @*#*@* dryer?” My voice got louder.

“Did you put it in the @*#*@* dryer?”

Bits of foam trickled out of the sides of my mouth.
“Of course, I put it in the dryer.”

“Why would you do that? I told you not to wash it. Many times. But you washed it and put it in the dryer! It shrunk several inches.”

“I can’t believe you cursed at me! You never curse. I’m not talking to you again!” She hung up the phone—and never spoke to me again.

We had been friends for four years. She lived nearby, and we road bikes together. My house had a no pets rule, but she helped me sneak a kitten into my room. I tried to ask her forgiveness the next time I saw her, but she didn’t respond. Later, I sent an apology and hoped she would forgive me over time. She never did. It was so unusual for me to swear, she couldn’t handle it. I even saw her years later at an amusement park and tried to talk to her, but she ignored me.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Proverbs 18:21 NKJV)

With a single instance of words spoken in anger, I killed a dear friendship. I could never retrieve the words once they left my mouth. I wish I had considered my words better. Now when I am angry, I don’t call someone right away. Instead, I wait until my head clears. I take deep breaths and try to think before I speak. It sounds so easy, but it is hard to always wait to speak. Even when I know how to act, sometimes I still mess up again.

I have to fill my mind with truth if I want good to come out in my words. Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

When I feed my mind by meditating on God’s word, encouraging things naturally spring forth. The difference between reading a verse and meditating on it, is how long I spend mulling it over so it sets in my mind. When I make a cup of tea, I don’t just dip the tea bag into the water and then throw away the bag. That would just be brown water. Instead, I let the leaves steep to get the full flavor. When I ruminate on God’s truth, the Holy Spirit helps it sink in and change my heart. Then I can speak uplifting things without even thinking about it because they have been stored up, waiting to be shared.

On the other hand, if I get busy and skim over my Bible reading, it shows up in my speech. Because I’m not feeding my heart and mind on good things, I get short with my colleagues and frustrated with people in traffic. My friends feel the brunt of my harsh words. The same way we have to nourish our bodies with food daily, we must feed ourselves with truth to be spiritually healthy.

Another way I strive to speak wisely is by praying every morning that God would stop me from saying anything that I don’t need to say. Psalm 141:3 says, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” I visualize a soldier watching over my mouth, helping me bite my tongue when I need to stay quiet. Sometimes, even when I feed my mind on nourishing thoughts, because I am human, garbage escapes my lips. It always helps me to pray for spiritual protection in my speech.
Meditate on the praiseworthy, and guard your lips so your speech will be seasoned with salt and bring joy to the hearer. Let your words bring life, not death. You can be a wellspring of hope that stirs up love and good works.

Prayer:

Dear God, Thank You for reminding us that the power of death and life is in the tongue. Help us to consider our words, especially in difficult situations, so we don’t say something we still regret years later. Keep leading us to Your Word, which is the source of life. Help us feed on Your truth so that the overflow of our lives will be rich nuggets of encouragement to those around us. May our tongues give life and not death. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Questions:

1. Have you ever said something you regretted? What fueled those words? Were you able to set it right?
2. What steps do you take to feed your mind on good things so you speak encouraging words?
3. What strategies or reminders help you to stop and think before you speak?
4. Do you have a special verse that helps you to watch your words?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NKJV.

“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” (James 3:5 NKJV*)

I hate you,” I shouted as I slammed the door of my bedroom. My disagreement with my mother caused a rash response I regretted as soon as I said it.

“You will not wear that dress; it’s too short.” My mother’s voice penetrated the wooden barrier between us, but my rebellious teenage mind was determined to get my way.

After my impulsive fiery comments had cooled, I left my room and heard sniffs coming from the kitchen. My mother tried to hide her tears, but I saw how my words had cut into her heart.

“Mom, I’m sorry. I don’t hate you.” Guilt overshadowed me when I peered into her damp eyes. Comforting arms reached out to swallow me in love, and I knew I was forgiven.

Joanna Eccles recently founded Words from the Honeycomb to provide resources that encourage people to grow in Christ. She desires to shape culture through her writing by addressing truths in relatable ways. Joanna has led Bible studies for over ten years and completed the year-long C.S. Lewis Fellows Program. She loves coffee and traveling, and lives in northern Virginia.
Words are one of the most powerful forces in the universe. God framed the worlds with the words of His mouth. The seas separated, plants grew, and animals were raised from the dust of the earth to roam the planet.

And the crowning glory of His words was when He said, “Let Us make man in Our image” (Genesis 1:26 NKJV).

Into man, God has placed His Spirit and given him the ability to fellowship with the King of the universe.

And into man God has also placed that same power of words.

With words we can create harmony, love, unity, fellowship, and healing; but we can also destroy, annihilate, and hate.

Words are swords leaving our mouths ready to cut, or a healing balm sent to comfort an ailing friend.

Some of us grew up hearing taunts spit at us by other children on the playground. The usual response would be “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” While that sounds like a clever retort, nothing could be further from the truth. A wound made by a stick or stone can heal and later is forgotten, but words can stab at our hearts leaving a painful opening in our soul.

God gives us many instructions in Scripture regarding words because He knows how rash and sinful we can be. Jesus taught that the mouth speaks what is in the heart (Luke 6:45). The words that came out of my mouth reflected what was in my heart during that childish outburst.

Paul also addressed the issue of our conversation in Colossians 4:6:

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

It’s difficult to speak words that are full of grace if we are nursing our own hurts. Rather than using speech that’s seasoned with salt, it’s more likely fiery pepper will come out because wounded people wound others. Emotional pain can erect barriers against relationships which could result in violent responses. Apologies are important, but they don’t remove the hurtful words that remain behind and can’t be taken back.

Allowing God to heal our hurts can also heal our mouths because the peace He puts within our hearts will be evident in the way we talk. We do this by focusing on His love and the inheritance He gave that makes us like Christ. Only then will we know how to answer each other with grace.

Battles have been started because of words. Peace has been accomplished through the spoken or written word. Freedom has been pursued because of inspiring speeches and treaties signed when control was exerted.

Winston Churchill said, “We are masters of the unsaid words, but slaves of those we let slip out.”

The words I said to my mother that day kept me enslaved until her forgiveness bandaged my shame. But the fact that I let those slicing words escape my mouth burned within me for years.

Exercising discipline can prevent the tongue from defilement and quench the sparks before they fly. God gives us grace through the Holy Spirit to defy sin. When we realize the misuse of speech is sin, we can control the potential fire in our mouths. The power behind our tongue should be used as a gift from God to edify instead of
a weapon made to destroy. The Word of God is the water to quench the consuming fire from our mouths.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank You for giving me Your Word to use as the water to quench the consuming fire in my mouth. Please lead me to the Scriptures I need to stand on, as I give You the reins of control for my tongue. Amen.

Questions:

1. According to Proverbs 10:17, how can we apply discipline to our lives that will be reflected in the way we talk?

2. How can following the instructions in Colossians 4:6 change our relationships?

3. How can becoming a living sacrifice, as outlined in Romans 12:1-2, affect our speech?

4. What does James 4:7 say about how we are to resist the devil?

*All Scripture verses are taken from the NKJV.


Finding Strength in the Words of Life
by Connie Wohlford

“T”here’s a strange man in my house! Please come and make him leave,” my mother said over the phone.

Okay, Mama. We’ll be right over.”

I had a good idea of who the man was and didn’t feel that Mama was in danger. But Guy, my husband, and I went right over. My parents’ home was only a quarter of a mile from our own.

We found my parents standing in the hall arguing. With a gentle voice, Daddy was saying, “Edee, you know me. I’m your husband.”

Barbara Latta’s desire is to help others find intimacy with God through a deeper understanding of the power of the Word. She writes a monthly column in her local newspaper and contributes to devotional websites and has stories in several anthologies. She recently published her first book, God’s Maps, Stories of Inspiration and Direction for Motorcycle Riders, available on Amazon. Barbara’s blog can be found at www.barbaralatta.blogspot.com.
The Power of Words

She would have none of it and demanded he leave. The ravages of dementia clouded her mind. This man she fell in love with at age fifteen, married at age eighteen, raised three children with, and had shared life with for sixty-four years, was now a strange man, unwelcome in her home. She feared he was there to do her harm.

Guy and I tried to convince her that he was not a stranger, insisting he was Rudy, her husband, my father. There was no persuading her.

I whispered a plea, “Oh God, please help. Please show us what to do. Please give us the words that will help Mama understand.”

Just then an idea came to me. I asked Daddy to go outside for a few minutes. Meanwhile, I hugged Mama and said, “Hello, Mama. We came to see you,” and proceeded with some small talk to redirect her thinking.

After a few minutes, Daddy came back in.

“Look, Mama. Daddy’s home.”

She looked at him and said, “Hi, Rudy.”

Relief and gratitude rushed over my father, Guy, and me. Here was a situation where I needed the right words and the right strategy. I needed words that would bring life and light into the very dark place where my parents were struggling.

God has the right words and the right plan every time. Jesus’ disciples had come to know that His words contained truth and life. But not everyone knew that.

An uncomfortable situation had arisen one day when Jesus was teaching a crowd of people. Several of Jesus’ followers had turned away and left. They didn’t understand the concept of Jesus’ teaching. They failed to see the spiritual significance when He began to explain who He was, where He came from, and why He came.

When He told them He had come down from Heaven, they didn’t get it. After all, many of them knew Him as the son of Joseph and Mary. Some had even been His childhood playmates, growing up in Nazareth.

“‘Come down from Heaven?’ Who does He think He is?” they mumbled.

They had seen Jesus heal sick people, and they had eaten bread and fish He miraculously provided just a couple of days before. With His power and influence, their hope was that He would be the political champion who would lead the Jews out from under the oppression of the Roman Empire. They were eager to follow a strong political leader who would not back down from the strong arm of the emperor across the Great Sea.

People gathered to hear Him teach in the Capernaum synagogue, but when He said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48 NKJV), eyebrows were raised. When He went on to say that one must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life, that was it. To some, He had crossed the line into the absurd and even the repulsive.

God’s laws forbade the eating of human flesh and the drinking of blood from any source (Leviticus 3:17; Lev 17:13-14). Yet, God’s laws established the sacrificial system with blood being the means of atonement for sin (Lev 17:11). Without the shedding of blood there’s no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

So some of Jesus’ followers were puzzled by His words and didn’t stick around any longer to try to understand. They had no idea Jesus was pointing to the future sacrifice of His flesh on the cross and the shedding of His blood for the remission of the sin of mankind. Offended and confused, they chose to move on.
Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:67-69 NKJV)

Words. Jesus had the right words—“the words of eternal life.” Every word Jesus spoke contained life.

As spokesman for the disciples, Peter confessed the hope and future they found in their leader and teacher. Jesus spoke words that reached into eternity. Where else would they go? Who else would they follow? Only Jesus had the words of eternal life, and they were confident of that.

Jesus’ words connect Earth with Heaven, mortal with immortal, the here and now with eternity. The human spirit yearns for something more—something that transcends the fall of Adam and Eve. In Jesus we find it—only in Jesus. After all, He has the words of eternal life, just as Peter stated. Think of it, life with a capital “L”—love, goodness, hope, and peace that lasts forever and ever and cannot be taken away.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6 NKJV). He assured His followers saying, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 NASB).

God has placed eternity into the heart of every person (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Each of us has a sense that there’s something beyond this life on earth, with its brevity and limitations. It’s true that some say they don’t believe that, but if God lead Solomon to write it in his book, then that’s the way it is.

Like Peter and the other disciples, we can know and confess that Jesus is the Christ. And as the first century followers did, we can hear and know His words. We have the Word of God—our Bibles—and we have the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself, living in us, comforting us, and speaking to us.

He is well able to speak living words that encourage and instruct us. Where else would we go? Jesus is the One who has the words of eternal life. And we are instructed and empowered to share those words with others. We can help them understand. How amazing, that we—mere mortals—can speak words of eternal life. The eternal destiny of another person may be depending on our willingness to step out and speak Jesus’ words to them. Let’s learn His words and be ready to share them when opportunities arise. Let us be like His early disciples and boldly proclaim the Good News of the Gospel to others. They may not yet know that God has placed eternity in their hearts. They may not realize who He really is.

Prayer:

Father God, Thank You for Jesus. And thank You for sending Him to give us the words of eternal life. Your love and grace are beyond understanding, and we’re so grateful. Help us, oh Lord, to share Your words of life with others. In Jesus’ name we pray—Amen.
When I can’t shake a feeling of anxiety, I can open my Bible and search for the boxed passages. I know they will restore calm to my heart and soundness to my thinking. Many of them are the more obscure verses, ones we don’t hear talked about a lot. But maybe you’ve discovered them as I have and counted them as priceless treasures. Which ones do you want to tuck away in your heart for an anxious time?

Peace. The power of God’s words brings peace to our hearts, inspiration to our souls, and guidance to our steps. May God and His peace guide you in this new year, and may He use the words we speak and write to comfort and encourage others.

To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.
Deuteronomy 4:35 NKJV*

Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress.
Psalm 71:3

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.
Hebrews 10:35

In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul.
Psalm 138:3

Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?
Isaiah 43:13

Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.
Psalm 24:8

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.
2 Thessalonians 3:16

*All verses are taken from the NKJV.
Speak ... to the people all the words of this life.
Acts 5:20 NKJV