

Pondering Words that Heal and Hurt

Proverbs 18:21 tells us, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

The tongue has the power of life and death. That is quite a statement! Many have heard the schoolyard saying, “Sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt you.” We all know that isn’t true; we’ve learned that from personal experience. Words can hurt. But we also know that words can heal.

In fact, words can destroy or create, they can build up or tear down, they can instill fear or comfort and they can offer hope or bring about pain. Words can inspire, lead and change lives in both positive and negative ways.

In all God’s creation, humans are the only ones who communicate using words. Words and language are one of the main ways we interact and relate to one another. Words are of critical importance in our lives and wield incredible power. Considering the immense power of words, do we use them with the care and respect they deserve?

God understands the power of words and reminds us in the Bible to be aware of how we use them. Our words are a window into what is going on in our hearts and minds. What we say and how we say it shows what we desire and where our heart is.

Luke 6:45 explains, “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

In this world that celebrates the “self” and seems to promote the concept that our every thought and feeling is of paramount importance and should be instantly shared with everyone else, God’s word tells us to, “... take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,” (John 1:19). Calvin Coolidge once said: “I have never been hurt by anything I didn’t say.”

Thinking before we open our mouths to speak is no easy task and one that takes considerable patience and work. The sad truth is that we, as human beings, are not very good at doing this on our own. It stands to reason that if what comes out of our mouths is a reflection of what’s in our hearts, then it’s our hearts that have to change.

To speak words of love instead of hate, we need to have hearts full of love. When we give ourselves to the one who is the definition of love and we live in the spirit and strive to be Christ-like disciples, our demeanour, words and thoughts will reflect that.

As Proverbs 18:21 advises, as we go about living our lives, let's pause and consider the immense power of our words before we speak.