



Quick Backdrop

It was shortly after dinner that I received a panicked message from one of my students. "I think I might be fired from my job." It seems that he had gotten into a bad situation with his employer over some things he had been posting on social media. In that moment the reality settled in that there wasn't much he could do to take those words back.

We use thousands of words a day in spoken, written, and electronic communication. Because of this it's easy for us to forget the power of those words.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

Read through the following Scripture passages. On a separate sheet of paper or in an e-doc, write a few notes about what each verse reveals about the power of our words.



Proverbs 18:20-21 (NIV)

²⁰ From the fruit of their mouth a person's stomach is filled; with the harvest of their lips they are satisfied. ²¹ The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

James 3:3-6 and 9-10 (NIV)

³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ... ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.



Matthew 12:33-37 (NIV)

³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

Often we don't give much thought to the words we say, but when you begin to consider that they have the power of life and death, or that our words steer the course of our lives, we start to see the bigger picture. I have to admit, I'm a little nervous to stand before God to give an account of "every empty word" I've ever spoken (it makes me appreciate grace all the more). As you begin to consider the power of the words you speak, take a moment to complete the "Speech Inventory" below to help you gauge if the words you speak are filled with death or life.

- *When I notice that people are in need of encouragement, I am often the person who will speak up to encourage them.*
- *People often approach me when they are in need of solid advice.*
- *I often give advice based upon biblical principles and lessons.*
- *I try not to listen to or spread gossip (even though it might be true).*
- *I try to make the words I speak match up to the life I profess as a Christian.*
- *While it may not always be easy, I do my best to always "speak the truth in love" even if that means speaking a difficult truth or something someone may not want to hear.*
- *I try to avoid saying things to others that might cause them emotional pain.*
- *In the event that I have said something that hurt someone, I am most concerned with seeking forgiveness and reconciliation for the words I have spoken.*
- *I will often come to the defense of those who are being hurt by other's words.*
- *My love of Jesus is apparent in the conversations I have with others.*

3 Wrap It Up (God, Change Me!)

While this exercise isn't a complete inventory of the things you say, it can certainly reveal some truth about the words you speak. Let's seek out God's direction in making sure our words are filled with life. Take a moment to close out your time in prayer. Pray for God's guidance and wisdom as you reflect upon the words you have spoken, this past week, this past month, this past year. Do you need to seek forgiveness and reconciliation from because of words you have spoken? Pray for the strength and courage to do that this week!

Fold or Cut