

The Tool in Everyone's Mouth

LIFEFAITHFUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

SCRIPTURE STUDY

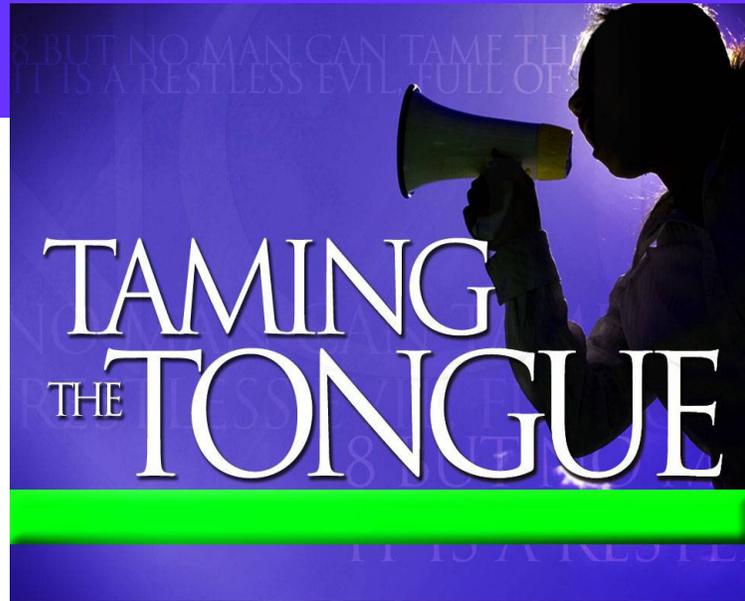
Proverbs 10:19
James 3:13-18
Proverbs 25:11
Song of Solomon 1:5-6; 4:1
Ephesians 4:29
Psalm 139
Proverbs 10:32
Proverbs 15:4
Revelation 22:1-2
Colossians 4:6
Matthew 12:36

DIGGING DEEPER

King Solomon was the consummate diplomat. He developed alliances with the nations surrounding Israel because of his tactful, wise words. We can bring peace to the lives of others by speaking words of peace and comfort.

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to heal relationships
and bring blessing to those you
have placed in my life.
Amen



WORDS OF BLESSING

Even though words can hurt, the **tongue can bring us and others great blessing and delight.** According to Proverbs 25:11, well-spoken words reflect beauty and value:

“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”
(NIV)

King Solomon gazed at the splendor and craftsmanship of his palace, gilded with cedar and overlaid with gold. Every vessel from which he drank was beautifully crafted and engraved. The king compares discreet, appropriate speech to beautiful, handmade jewelry. Words of affirmation, acceptance, and affection can profoundly impact someone's character and self-esteem.

Most women struggle with self-esteem issues. It was no different in Solomon's day. In his love story, the Song of Solomon, his new bride believed she was ugly and undesirable. Listen to her words in the first chapter, verse 5-6:

“Dark am I, O daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Kedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon. Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have neglected.” (NIV)

Apparently the Shunammite bride of Solomon had some serious struggles with self-confidence. She said, “Don’t look at me...I’m too tan.” Every Hollywood starlet spends money on silicone and tanning spray. But Solomon’s young wife was not talking about tawny, sexy skin. She was describing herself as a working girl slaving in the hot sun, and her tan was leathery and sun-spotted. Her hands were calloused and rough from working in the fields, and oh, yes, her hair was a mess! But Solomon, the infatuated bride groom, loved her just like she was, and spoke words of acceptance and affirmation to her:

“How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful. Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing....” Song of Solomon 4:1 (NIV)

Husbands don’t praise their wives for having goat hair and sheep teeth—but give Solomon a few points for trying. The king spent an entire book of poetry praising his wife. Proverbs 12:25 and 15:4 also affirm this fact. We should speak words of love and encouragement to those God places around us. Paul confirms Solomon’s advice in Ephesians 4:29:

“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.” (NIV)

Unwholesome talk is not nutritious. Wholesome words should produce growth and healing. Paul not only concurs with King Solomon, but further states that edifying, encouraging words should be applied according to the individual needs of the person. We must speak words “according to their unique needs.” Some children need to be appreciated when they finish a task: “Good job!” Some offspring need to be held and cuddled: “I love you.” Some need to be accepted and loved unconditionally: “I love you even when you make a mistake.”

- Think about those closest to you: your spouse, your children, your friends and co-workers. List four of them here. From your observations, what do you think their three most important needs are? In other words, what would they most enjoy receiving from someone else?
- Do you struggle with negative self-esteem? In what areas? Read Psalm 139, and write what God has to say about His love for you.
- Give three examples of affirming words. Give three examples of loving, affectionate words. Give three examples of appreciative words. Write them on the back of this sheet. Practice speaking them to others every day this week.

HEALING WORDS

In the previous lesson, we discussed the importance of positive speech. But wise speech must also be **timely** and **appropriate**. Knowing what to say and when to speak is the foundation of tact. Solomon writes in Proverbs 10:32:

“The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.” (NIV)

Paul the apostle concurs in his letter to the Colossian Christians. He admonishes them that words should be filled with grace (the Greek adjective implies *undeserved favor* or *kindness*) seasoned with salt. Salt was the chief preservative in ancient cultures. Salt prevented decay. Our friends and neighbors who don’t know Christ need our love. They also need to be rescued from the ravages of sin in Colossians 4:6:

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (NIV)

We share the good news of the gospel in a timely and responsible way because eternity is in the balance. Jesus said our words carry on past our lifetime: if we haven't received Christ's forgiveness and invite Him into our lives, our words will come back to haunt us. Our fate is sealed:

“...but I tell you, men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words, you will be condemned.”
Matthew 12:36 (NIV)

When we have received a great gift, it is only natural to share our joy. In the same way, we have the precious gift of eternal life. We need to speak “graciously, seasoned with salt.” Weighed words can change the course of someone's life.

- Who do you know that needs to hear the Good News of salvation? List them here. Ask God to give you not only the discretion to share at the right time, but the boldness to speak clearly and kindly.
- Can you describe a time in your life when you have been strengthened, encouraged, or cheered up by someone's words? When was it? What did they say?
- Have the words of concerned people ever kept you out of trouble? Explain.

WORDS OF RECONCILIATION

Ambassadors are mediators whose timely, discreet words can save lives and bring peace among warring nations. Good news brings hope and health to the listener. When is the last time you watched the nightly news and felt better about yourself and the world you live in? We could really use some good news! Solomon commends the man or woman who speaks healing words in Proverbs 15:4:

“The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life.” (NIV)

The Tree of Life grew in the Garden of Eden—only Adam and Eve's sin brought death and expulsion from the garden. We read again of the Tree of Life in Revelation. Revelation 22:1-2 describe the tree of life as its leaves shade heaven itself:

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are *for the healing of the nations.*” (NIV)

Remember Jesus' beatitude? “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” We look the most like Jesus when we assume the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus died to reconcile us to God the Father. We have the privilege of connecting people with God. When we are in the middle of a spat—we can say words that will ignite or diffuse the explosion. What are some explosive words? “You always, I never, Don't you ever, You'd better...” For every word in Adolph Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, 125 people died in WWII. Peacemaking words are “I understand, I'm listening, I get it, How do you feel, What do you think?”

King Solomon was a great diplomat and mediator. But even as king, he did not hold the power we now have as Christ's ambassadors on earth. Let us speak peace to a world at war. Let us speak reconciliation to those estranged from the God who loves them.

- Who do you know that is conflicted and hurting? Pray for them and speak words of comfort.
- Is there a conflict that God has called you to mediate? What steps can you make to bring peace?
- Read James 3:13-18. List the difference between heavenly and earthly wisdom as described by James? Verse 18 states that “peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” What are some seeds of peace and reconciliation that you have sown in the past? What was the resulting harvest?

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

MATCH THE FOLLOWING VERSES TO THE APPROPRIATE MESSAGE:

Proverbs 10:19	Live a life of love.
Proverbs 13:3	Only say what is helpful.
Romans 6:13	Hold your tongue.
Ephesians 4:29	Be slow to speak.
Ephesians 5:1–4	Offer yourselves to God.
James 1:19	Guard your lips.

Read the following passages and write down your observations. How can you learn to speak timely, peaceful words?