

## Words Have Power

Dr. Deb Roy, a researcher and cognitive scientist with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, recorded the first three years of his child's life to learn how humans acquire language. He and his wife rigged their home with recording devices, which they used to collect over 200,000 hours of audio and video footage. Amassing, condensing, and editing the recordings enabled them to hear baby sounds like “gaga” evolve into words like “water.”

If someone wanted to conduct a research project at your home, would you participate if you knew that your every syllable would be recorded and analyzed? What would the study reveal? Proverbs 18 offers insight about some unwise speech patterns. The writer notes that foolish people express their own opinions instead of trying to understand what others have to say (v.2). Does this characterize us? Do we sometimes provoke fights with our words (v.7), or speak impulsively and “answer a matter before[hearing] it”? (v.13). “2 A fool has no delight in understanding, But in expressing his own heart... 7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul... 13 He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:2, 7, 13).

We need to become students of our speech. With God's help we can identify and transform destructive dialogue into words of encouragement that are “good for necessary edification” and that “impart grace to the hearers” (Eph. 4:29). Our words have the power to build up or tear down.

### “Fishin’ Where They Ain’t”

An acquaintance is a fisherman and a wise man. After climbing into his waders and boots and gathering up his gear, he sits on the tailgate of his truck and scans the river for 15 minutes or more, looking for rising fish. “No use fishing where they ain’t,” he says. This makes me think of another question: “Do I fish for souls where they ain’t?”

It was said of Jesus that He was “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34). As Christians, we are to be unlike the world in our behavior, but squarely in it as He was. So we have to ask ourselves: Do I, like Jesus, have friends who are sinners? If I have only Christian friends, I may be fishing for souls “where they ain’t.”

Spending time with nonbelievers is the first step in “fishing.” Then comes love—a heart-kindness that sees beneath the surface of their off-hand remarks and listens for the deeper cry of the soul. It asks, “Can you tell me more about that?” and follows up with compassion. “There is much preaching in this friendliness,” preacher George Herbert (1593–1633) said.

Such love is not a natural instinct. It comes solely from God. And so we pray: “Lord, when I am with nonbelievers today, may I become aware of the cheerless voice, the weary countenance, or the downcast eyes that I, in my natural self-preoccupation, could easily overlook. May I have a love that springs from and is rooted in Your love. May I listen to others, show Your compassion, and speak Your truth today.” We are to be channels of God's truth—not reservoirs.

### Just Like Riding a Bike

In a letter to his son Eduard, Albert Einstein gave this advice: “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.” The great physicist's advice is wise and practical.

This wise counsel can apply to the Christian life. Many believers by faith keep moving ahead through painful and trying circumstances. But when they experience a personal moral

failure, they lose their balance and fall. Their regret and feeling of unworthiness of God's forgiveness may then keep them down, and they no longer move ahead in their spiritual life.

The Bible gives us many examples of those who have experienced serious personal failure. Abraham lied to Pharaoh about his wife, Sarah (Gen. 12:11-17). Jacob deceived his father to acquire Esau's blessing (Gen. 27:18-29). Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock instead of speaking to it (Num. 20:7-12). Despite their failures, we are told: "all these obtained a good testimony through faith" (Heb. 11:39).

These Bible characters are lifted up as examples because after they fell, they turned back to God and began to follow Him again. Have you lost your spiritual balance through a sinful choice, which is keeping you down? Repent and follow the God of second chances.

### **Bible Memory**

A New York Times article linked the increase of computer storage with the decrease of data in the human mind. Our electronic aids now remember phone numbers, driving directions, and other information we used to learn by repeated use. In schools, memorization and oral recitation are disappearing from the curriculum. We have become, according to the Times, "products of a culture that does not enforce the development of memory skills."

Yet never have we as followers of Christ been in greater need of hiding God's Word in our hearts (Psalm 119:9-11). Scripture memory is more than a helpful mental exercise. The goal is to saturate our minds with God's truth so that our lives will conform to His ways. The psalmist wrote: "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way" (Psalm 119:33, 37).

Why not begin committing Scripture to memory? Daily consistency and review are keys to success. And just like physical exercise, this spiritual discipline is enhanced when done with a small group or with a friend. Let's not forget to remember and follow the life-giving wisdom of God's Word. Let the Bible fill your mind, rule your heart, and guide your life.

### **Of Baptism and Boats**

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16) People often ask, "Is a man lost just because he is not baptized?" Actually, he is lost because he is a sinner. If a man who can't swim falls into a lake and a boat is sent, but he won't get into the boat, is he drowning because he won't get into the boat? No, he is drowning because he is in the water. Likewise, a man is not lost just because he is not baptized, but is lost because he is in sin. Just as the boat is the means of rescue and one must get into it, the gospel is the means of salvation and must be obeyed (baptism included) to rescue from sin.

### **A Moments Wisdom**

--You can't let praise or criticism get to you. It's a weakness to get caught up in either one.

--There's a basic human weakness inherent in all people which tempts them to want what they can't have and not want what is readily available to them.

--The weaker you are the louder you bark. He who establishes his argument by noise and command shows that his reason is weak.