

THE LAWS OF INCREASE AND PROTECTION - SERIES

1. THE LAW / POWER OF WORDS

Main Scripture: Psalms 19:14

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer”.

The referenced Scripture was Psalmist David’s prayer after he realized how important his words are. Words can impact not just our lives, but the lives of everyone around us. God created our voices to be in tune with our heart. If we speak uplifting things to others, and always try to build one another up, then we will in turn be built up and bring encouragement.

On the other side of the coin, if we only say negative things, and always tear people down, we speak negativity into our own lives. By simply changing what we say from a negative to a positive, we can experience an increase in positivity and encouragement into our own lives. It’s all in the way we choose our words.

History records that in early of October 1871, there was what was described as the deadliest forest fire in U.S. history engulfing the dry woodlands of northeastern Wisconsin. As the fire raged on, the flames and intense heat killed more than 1,200 people and consumed some two billion trees. This fire may have been started by mere sparks from passing trains.

How true are the words of James 3:5: “See how small a fire it takes to set a great forest ablaze!”

Why did the Bible writer make such a statement?

The point of James’ illustration is made clear in verse 6. “The tongue is also a fire.” The tongue represents our ability to speak. Like fire, our speech has the potential for causing great harm.

The Bible says in Proverbs 18:21; “death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Of course, we do not stop talking just out of concern that we might say something harmful, any more than we refuse to use fire because we fear the damage it might cause. The key is control. If we control fire, we can use it to cook our food, warm

our bodies, and light up a dark night. If we tame our tongue, we can use its power to honor God and to benefit others as we read earlier in Psalms 19:14.

In using our tongue to speak / talk or to communicate with others, we need to learn: -

1. **When to Speak / Talk / Communicate**
2. **How to speak / Talk / Communicate**

WHEN TO SPEAK / COMMUNICATE

There is time to be silent and time to speak

Speech is part of our daily life, but we do not need to talk all the time. In fact, the Bible says that there is “a time to be silent.” (Eccl. 3:7) Maintaining silence when others are speaking can be a mark of respect. (Job 6:24) Controlling our tongue to keep quiet about a confidential matter gives evidence of discretion and discernment. (Prov. 20:19) Restraining our tongue when we are provoked is the course of wisdom (Ps. 4:4).

How can we show appreciation for God’s gift of speech?

If a friend gave you a beautiful present, you would probably not store it out of sight. Rather, you would show your appreciation by putting it to good use. We show our gratitude for God’s gift of speech by using it wisely. That might include expressing our feelings, communicating our needs, sharing words of encouragement, and giving God praise. (Ps. 51:15)

How can we determine the best “time to speak”?

The words of Proverbs 25:11 illustrate the importance of choosing the right time to speak: “Like apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time.” Golden apples by themselves would be beautiful. Placing them against the background of silver carvings would enhance their beauty. Similarly, carefully picking a suitable time to speak can make our speech more appealing and effective.

Why?

Our words may be just what our hearer truly needs, but unless we discern the best time to speak, their meaning could be lost. (**Read Proverbs 15:23.**) For example, in March 2011 an earthquake and tsunami devastated parts of eastern Japan,

wiping out entire cities. More than 15,000 lost their lives. Although Jehovah's Witnesses in the area suffered along with their neighbors, they took advantage of every opportunity to use the Bible to comfort those who were mourning convincing many of the local people who had deep-rooted Buddhist beliefs and little or no knowledge of Bible teachings. Many were in much pain and distress and could not receive the message.

The witnesses in the region of eastern Japan followed Jesus' example. Two and a half years after the tsunami, they shared in a worldwide campaign to distribute a tract known as "Kingdom News No. 38", entitled "Can the Dead Really Live Again?"

At that time, more people were ready to be comforted by the heartwarming message of the resurrection, and many householders readily accepted their personal copy of the tract. Of course, cultures and religious beliefs vary greatly, so we need to be discerning when it comes to choosing the right time to speak. Similarly, we need to be discerning when speaking about the truth to our unbelieving relatives. We want them to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior, but we must be patient and perceptive. Speaking the right words at the right time may help to open their hearts.

Jesus knew when not to speak, but he also knew when it was the right time to speak. (John 18:33-37; 19:8-11) He once told his disciples: "I still have many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear them now." (John 16:12)

In what situations will selecting the right time to speak make our speech more effective?

There are occasions when we need to discern the right time to speak. For example, someone may offend us, even with well-intentioned words. It would be prudent on our part to take time to reflect on whether the matter is serious enough to say something. If we must speak, it would not be wise to approach the offender when we are upset and perhaps might speak a bit rashly. The Bible says in Proverbs 15:28. "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil".

Why should we be careful to select the proper words?

Words have the power to hurt as well as to heal. **(Read Proverbs 12:18.)** Using words to inflict pain is common in Satan's world. The field of entertainment incites many to "sharpen their tongue just like a sword" and to "aim their cruel words like

arrows.” (Ps. 64:3) One example of “cruel words” is sarcasm, stinging remarks intended to belittle or rebuke others.

Sarcasm is often meant to be humorous, but it can quickly deteriorate into disrespectful, insulting speech. Cruel sarcasm is one form of abusive speech that Christians should “put away.” Humor can add spice to our speech, but we need to avoid the trap of trying to evoke a laugh by resorting to cutting, sarcastic quips that hurt or humiliate others. The Bible admonishes us: “Let a rotten word not come out of your mouth, but only what is good for building up as the need may be, to impart what is beneficial to the hearers.”—Eph. 4:29, 31.

How is our heart involved in selecting the correct words?

Jesus taught that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matt. 12:34) Therefore, choosing the appropriate words begins in the heart. Our speech usually reflects how we truly feel about others. If our hearts are full of love and compassion, our speech will likely be positive and upbuilding.

How can we enhance our ability to select the right words?

Selecting the proper words also involves mental effort and good judgment. Even wise King Solomon “pondered and made a thorough search” in order to “find delightful words and to record accurate words of truth.” (Eccl. 12:9, 10) Do you find that it is often a challenge to come up with “delightful words”? If so, you may need to enlarge your vocabulary. One way to do this is to take note of how words are used in the Bible and in our Christian publications. Learn the meanings of unfamiliar expressions. More important, learn how to use words in a way that helps others. Regarding the relationship between God and his firstborn Son, we read: “God has given me [Jesus] the tongue of those taught, so that I may know how to answer the tired one with the right word.” (Isa. 50:4) Taking time to meditate on what we are going to say can help us to find the right words.

(Joshua 1:19) We could ask ourselves questions like, ‘Will my words really convey what I want to say? What effect will my choice of words have on my listener?’

Why is easily understood speech important?

Trumpets were used in Israel to assemble the camp and to disperse it, as well as to spur the army to do battle. Fittingly, the Bible uses the trumpet blast to illustrate the need for speech that is easily understood. An indistinct trumpet call could be disastrous for an advancing army. In the same way, if our speech is unduly vague

or indirect, it may well be confusing or misleading. Of course, in our effort to keep our words crisp and clear, we would not want to be blunt or tactless. —

Read 1 Corinthians 14:8, 9.

Jesus set the finest example of appropriate word selection. Consider his short yet powerful discourse recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7. Jesus did not use flowery or ambiguous speech; nor did he employ harsh or hurtful language. Instead, he chose clear, simple expressions to reach the hearts of his listeners. For example, to allay the people's anxieties over their daily need for food, he referred to how God provides for the birds of heaven. Then, comparing his hearers to birds, he asked: "Are you not worth more than they are?" (Matt. 6:26) What a loving appeal in simple, understandable words that touch the heart!

HOW TO SPEAK / COMMUNICATE

How we say something can be as important as what we say. When Jesus spoke in the synagogue of his hometown of Nazareth, the people were "amazed at the gracious words coming out of his mouth." (Luke 4:22)

Gracious speech appeals to the heart and in no way weakens the power of our tongue. In fact, graciousness can make our speech more persuasive. (Prov. 25:15) We can imitate Jesus' gracious speech by being kind, courteous, and considerate of others' feelings. Seeing the effort a crowd made to hear him speak, Jesus was moved with pity and "started to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34) Even when he was being insulted, Jesus did not resort to harsh speech. —1 Pet. 2:23.

When we are speaking with family members and close friends in the congregation, how can we imitate Jesus?

Speaking with mildness and tact can be a challenge when our listener is someone whom we know very well. We might feel at liberty to be very frank. That can be true whether we speak with a family member or a close friend in the congregation.

Did Jesus feel that his close relationship with his disciples granted him liberty to speak harshly to them?

Not at all! When his closest followers continued to argue over who was greater, Jesus corrected them with kind words and an illustration of a young child. (Mark 9:33-37) Elders can imitate Jesus' example by giving counsel "in a spirit of mildness."—Gal. 6:1.

Even when someone says something offensive, responding with gracious words can have positive results. (Prov. 15:1) For example, the teenage son of a single mother was leading a double life. A well-meaning Christian sister said to the mother: “It’s too bad you have failed at child training.” The mother thought for a moment and responded: “It’s true that things are not going well right now, but his training is a work in progress. This mild response helped to maintain peace between the sisters, and it encouraged the son, who overheard the conversation. He realized that his mother had not given up on him. This moved him to stop his bad associations. Whether in the company of our brothers, our family, or strangers, we should always let our words “be gracious, seasoned with salt.”—Col. 4:6.

How will following Jesus’ example of speaking help us to use the power of our tongue for good?

The ability to express our thoughts and feelings in words is truly a marvel. May we follow Jesus’ example by choosing the right time, striving to select the proper words, and putting forth effort to be gracious. Then the power of our tongue will be a healing to our listeners and pleasing to Jehovah, the Giver of the precious gift of speech.