



WEEK THREE: ENCOURAGING WORDS

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Words are important. We use our words to communicate hopes, dreams, love, and more. We also use them to harm, destroy, and defame those that are the closest to us.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) What is the most encouraging thing anyone has ever said to you? How long ago was it said?

Into the Bible

- 2) Our natural inclination is to use words that are “unwholesome” (Ephesians 4:29) or “corrupting” (Ephesians 4:29, ESV), because speech is little more than a symptom of a deeper heart problem. Read **Ephesians 4:29-32** to see the Biblical progression. What does our natural pattern of speech look like? What are we called to change it to reflect? From where do we get the ability to change (think emptying your gas tank to fill it up again)?

ACTIONS SPEAK

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- 3) The Bible takes words seriously. Sometimes this is encouraging. At other times, it is a very sobering reality. Either way, it illustrates our responsibility as Jesus-followers to choose our words carefully. What do the following passages have to say about the potential danger and/or redemptive value of our speech?
- a. **Ecclesiastes 10:12-14**
 - b. **Matthew 15:11, 18-19**
 - c. **Romans 10:17**
 - d. **Colossians 4:5-6**
 - e. **James 3:2-12**

How Does This Apply?

- 4) **Hebrews 3:13** says to “encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Think about a positive characteristic you see in every person in your group. Specifically think of an area where you see God using them and/or working through them. Take time together to share those things with the people in your group. Use this as an opportunity to speak life and truth into the people in your group, who are the very people you’re doing life together with.
- 5) Think about a time that you encouraged someone and saw his face light up instantly. Now think about a time that you spoke quickly and harshly to someone and saw her face fall immediately (we’ve all done it; there’s grace). Based on how similar words have affected you, how can you start using your speech to build others up around you?

ACTIONS SPEAK

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Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

- 6) The first thing God does in the Bible is speak things into existence *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). In John 1, Jesus is described as “the Word.” The clearest revelation God has left of Himself is a Book. God has always been, and will always be, a God of speech. He speaks to create, teach, correct, heal, and much more. We are created in His image. This means that people reflect His nature, character, and even physical appearance (as seen through Jesus) more than any other part of creation. This also means that we have the ability to communicate with more complexity, clarity, and power than anything else in creation, through our speech.

Yes, We are far more limited; we cannot create *ex nihilo*. However, this explains why our words have so much effect on other people. God’s words have power to build people up, just as our words have the power to build people up. As God’s words have power to correct people who are in sin, so our words have power to correct people who are in sin. There are far more examples than can be included here, and though our ability pales in comparison to God’s, it is still an essential part of being created in God’s image. That’s why it’s so important to be intentional with our speech. How does this understanding affect our care and use of our words around others?

Genesis 1

Mark 5:21-24, 35-42

John 1

Mark 4:35-41