

The Power of the Tongue

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INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Greek doctors discovered that words could heal, but this had already been discovered by the wise Solomon who said: **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue”** Proverbs 18:21. Modern researchers have found that what we say influences others and ourselves. So if our language is coarse and disrespectful, negative and inconsiderate, we will produce gloom and pain; while, if we use appropriate words, full of life, love, and understanding, we will instill peace and good.

Words that edify

Words affect the immune system, physical health, and mood of the individual. But not only the words, but the attitude of life, the behavior and the way of being of the person. Simple exposure to negative expressions: “there is no way out,” “you can’t,” “it’s impossible,” “she has no remedy,” “I hate you,” etc., increases the levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. Our language, along with attitude and way of being, has an impact on how we develop in life and leaves marks on our body. I remember when I was young, I worked with a man who was always cursing and using foul and distasteful language. Nobody liked being with him, least of all me, but I had no other choice. I tried to be polite to him even though he didn’t deserve it. In any situation, good or bad, words came from his mouth that broke the listeners’ spirit. He was not an ugly person,

but his sullen words had caused a permanent frown, wrinkles at the corner of his lips and under his eyes even though he was not very old. His gaze was contemptuous and at times mocking and ironic. I will never forget, after I stopped working with him, I found out that he had died. I want to think that in some way I was able to mitigate his bitterness to an extent.

Depending on how we use our language, this will be the quality of our life. Jesus taught: "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Luke 6:45. That is to say, that what we speak is a sample of what is in the mind. People who do not like soccer at all, you will never hear them talk about this universal entertainment. I know a person who, whenever possible, refers me to this or that soccer team or the last signing made by his favorite team. I always remind him that this does not interest me, but he forgets and returns to "recreate" the passion that harbors in his mind.

If I live in the superficial, vulgar, or banal, my language will reveal it. In fact, in prisons, which I have visited quite a bit by the way, very crude language is heard among inmates. If we use negative words, our lives will be colored in the tone that is uttered. Any savvy marketer knows that the use of certain terms attracts the potential customer, while some words drive them away. The apostle Paul knew perfectly the power that is in the tongue, for this reason he expressed: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." Ephesians 4:29.

Good words convince, dissuade, elevate, encourage, hope, move to action... On the contrary, inappropriate words discourage, drive away, hurt, destroy, negativize, etc. The power of a word can only be measured by the results it brings about. There are words that have a kind of music that is pleasant to the ear. As soon as they are pronounced with the proper intonation, they exert a good psychological influence on the listener and on the person who pronounces them: Happiness, life, love, forgiveness, well-being, profit, beauty, health, harmony, unity, peace, hope, youth, joy, success, comfortable, appreciation, friendship, etc. But we once again emphasize that it is not only the mere word that produces the effect, but there would be a certain magic in the matter. It is the attitude we adopt, the way we look, the tone of our voice, what is in the heart.

Transformed hearts and lips

There are people who use very good words, but nothing more. Your heart may be as distant from their meaning as the East is from the West. Come on, one can say to another person that he loves her, that she is his heaven, his only love and similar and wonderful things, but be betraying her, which implies that what we say must not only be beautiful but must be born from an honest heart. This is what the spirit of prophecy teaches us: "Kind, tender, compassionate words will flow from sanctified hearts and lips." *Sons and Daughters of God*, pg. 180.

A Christian who has a good relationship with God will have mastered the use of his language or will be on his way to do so, because the Holy Spirit transforms from the inside out. When we consecrate ourselves to God, a work of purification begins that affects our way of seeing life, of treating others, of speaking to them. We will understand that what we say provokes good or bad reactions, and that it is our duty to say words that encourage and inspire hope.

James warns us that we must control our language, because this, although small, has great power: **“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!”** James 3:5. I have known carnal brothers to distance themselves because of things that have been said. I have seen in meetings of friends how a hasty and reckless word or expression has ignited the spirits of the participants. There are people who speak without thinking what they say and others who say everything they think without considering the reactions they will produce in others. The emotions and feelings of the moment can also condition our language. Someone told me that he had gotten angry with his wife and decided to share his outrage on social media. Incredible!

It is not a good idea to get carried away by emotions and feelings that invade us because they are as changeable as time. An emotion and a state of mind are different things. It may be that we are sad about something we have experienced, that is normal. When I lost my parents, sadness invaded me, but I had to overcome those emotions that produced in me dejection, because one thing is to be sad as a natural reaction to an event that hits us and another is to decide to be sad every day, because this affects our language and causes damage to the body and mind.

Another important aspect to consider is that we should not react badly or get angry when someone speaks hurtful words to us. It may be that the person is having a hard time, or maybe they did not mean what they said or the person lost control and composure. It is a powerful Christian sign to return good for evil (1 Peter 3: 8, 9) and to end the ancient law of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us. In addition, we would also like to be forgiven or understood when we adopt inappropriate attitude and language.

Conclusion

Dear youth, the words we speak have power. We must, therefore, place ourselves in the hands of the Divine Artificer, so that He transforms us into his image. From a regenerated heart will emerge a language that will bless, inspire, hope, and help the listener. Let us take our Savior as our guide: “The Prince of teachers, His words will be found a guide to His co-workers till the end of time” *Education*, pg. 81. Would you like it to be like this? What do you think?

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For reflection:

1. How can you define what language is?
2. What can you communicate with words?
3. What gives words quality?