

The Power of Words

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Upon High
Places

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT

General Conference Youth Department

My dear youth:

There are people who speak without thinking and hurt others. Their justification is that they like to say things to people's face directly. But sometimes what they say is not the truth, or they exaggerate, or lie, or it is simply their point of view. They go through life using inappropriate language and sow pain in the heart of the listeners. These kinds of people believe that they can speak or write whatever they want, but the Bible teaches us something different: **"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."** Proverbs 25:11.

According to this text, there is a "word," that is a way of speaking, a concrete and special language, which is appropriate to use with our neighbor and not just any expression that occurs to us to say.

Destructive language

It is an undeniable truth that the way we express ourselves can be the flavor of life for life or an avalanche that devastates everything in its path. The advice that the introductory text gives us is wonderful, very useful and necessary, if we want to

correctly represent our Master Jesus and fulfill the noble mission that he has entrusted to us of preaching the Gospel.

Jesus had to rebuke the Jews who lived far from God, because they were doing a lot of harm to sincere and humble people. **“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.”** Matthew 12:35.

What we speak is a clear indication of what we have in our heart. If I decide to belittle a person, or comment something negative about him, or disrespect him, or make comments with double meaning... it is a sign that I do not love or respect the other person, because the good person brings good things out of his heart. If the words are not good it is because he do not have them and it is branded as “bad.” This is not pleasant at all, so we have to review our way of speaking.

There are in our days many misunderstandings, abuses, enmities, lawsuits, and even hatred between brothers of the faith or blood relatives, because of what is said and how it is said. We do not know the heart; this is a divine prerogative, but the words can be weighed, they show what is in the mind of the person, as indicated by the Spirit of Prophecy: “Our words index the state of our heart; and whether men talk much or little, their words express the character of their thoughts. A man’s character may be quite accurately estimated by the nature of his conversation. Sound, truthful words have the right ring in them.” *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pg. 17.

People who believe that the way of speaking is not important and that everyone can say what they want and to whom they want, are wrong. The Bible tells us that we will give an account of our words on the day of judgment. What we say to the people we live with will come out as testimony against us or for us. Something as apparently inconsequential as the way of speaking turns out to be a test that God will take into account in the final judgment. How solemn is this thought. What we say and how we say it turns out not to be carried away by the wind, but rather to be recorded: **“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”** Matthew 12:37.

“Speech is one of the great gifts of God. It is the means by which the thoughts of the heart are communicated. It is with the tongue that we offer prayer and praise to God. With the tongue we convince and persuade. With the tongue we comfort and bless, soothing the bruised, wounded soul. With the tongue we may make known the wonders of the grace of God. With the tongue also we may utter perverse things, speaking words that sting like an adder.” *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pg. 17.

I remember the case of a young woman with whom I studied the Bible, who told me that when she was little, her mother always told her: “You don't do it well,” “it's not like that,” “you're clumsy,” “everything falls out of your hands.” She grew up with this thought and as an adult she was still being hurt by these mental projections after so many years, and not only did that memory cause her pain, but she actually felt clumsy. I don't think her mother didn't love her daughter, but it is true that that way she raised her was not correct. God places children in our homes so that they learn, not with shouting, censuring, and scolding, but with words full of tenderness, love, and wise instruction.

“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.” James 3:5, 6.

The edifying language

It is not too late to start. What we have talked about and how we talked about it is no longer ours and we cannot change it; it belongs to the past, but we can correct ourselves. With the help of God and willpower directed by the Holy Spirit, we will be able to achieve significant changes.

The Lord Jesus, who is our example in everything, left us the guideline to follow in relation to the use of words: “Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His relationships with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.” *Steps to Christ*, pg. 12.

Let us note what the Bible says regarding God’s words: **“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”** Psalm 12:6. We also find the prophetic text regarding the Messiah and His language: **“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”** Isaiah 61:1-3.

The Lord Jesus Christ is called in the Gospel of John: *The Word* or *Logos* (John 1:1). The word we speak has two phases: The thought and the expressed. Jesus is the “audible” Word of God. He has come to this world to make known to us the mind of the Father, what He thinks in relation to each one of us. If Jesus had not incarnated, we would not know that God is love and that he wants to save us. The thought of the Father has become flesh in Christ; He is the Word that reaches our hearts and moves us to the extreme with the aim of redeeming us. Thus, it is fulfilled that good words come out of a good heart. Everything that the Master taught us comes to soften our life of suffering, to give us hope, to remove the guilt of sin, to grant us power to free ourselves from the attraction of sin. Every word that we imbibe from the lips of Christ elevates, inspires, encourages, transforms, and fills us with joy, because it speaks the truth and the truth sets us free.

Conclusion

Dear youth: Could it be that we want to follow the example of the Lord Jesus and use language that edifies our listeners? Will we use only words that have power to uplift the soul of our neighbor? Will we encourage the fallen? Will we comfort the sad? Will we hope for the one who suffers? We can do it and I invite you to do it with the power of God. Amen.

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For personal reflection and group discussion:

1. How would you define the word “power?”
2. In what sense can a word be powerful?
3. What do the words we use reveal?
4. Are words only limited to language?
5. What should be highlighted about the language used by the Lord Jesus Christ?