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"Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." That is the biggest lie ever told. Words have tremendous power.

When I was in the 6th grade, I earned a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. I was determined to be the Karate Kid. By the way, do you remember the little guy who was the smallest kid in your class. That was me.

I had yet to learn anything about physics, however. I did not know that regardless of unfounded arrogance, the big guy wins 9 times out of 10. I started running my mouth to a 10th grader stuck in a 7th grader's body.

What happened next was over in 15 seconds. The 7th grader tried to throw me into my locker. I bounced off the locker next to mine right back at him. He hit me twice, and I laid on the ground looking up at him while everyone in the hall encircled us. All of this happened because I couldn't control my tongue. Words have power - for good or for bad.

Part of my punishment involved writing the 3rd chapter of the book of James 10 times. I think I still have some of it memorized. That chapter details the immense power of tongue. This chapter calls the tongue a fire - a restless evil full of deadly poison.

You have heard the saying, "You will eat your words." That phrase stems from the book of Proverbs - chapter 18. Verse 20 and 21 say this,

From the fruit of their mouth a person's stomach is filled; with the harvest of their lips they are satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Words have the power of life and death. The way you use them will have a profound impact on the climate of your life.

5 Suggestions for Using Your Words Wisely

1. **Words can define the culture and tone of your family, business, etc.** - Do you affirm the behavior that you want to see more of? Do you praise your kids? Does your wife know how beautiful she is to you? Or do you criticize and tear down? The words you use will absolutely set the tone of your business or family. Don't be the guy who complains all the time and wonders why his company has a negative culture.
2. **Gossip is a cancer** - Gossip ruins culture. It is a sign of cowardice. It disrespects everyone involved. Don't allow it - period.
3. **Beware of joking and teasing** - This is a sensitive subject for me as I have wounded many people by what I believed was innocent teasing. Teasing destroys trust and breaks down communication. It can strike at the insecurities of a person's heart. I grew up pretending like teasing didn't bother me. It did. As a result, I kept everyone at a distance. This wound impacted my relationship with my friends, my parents, and even my marriage. It is something I've had to work through. Be very careful with innocent teasing.
4. **Be intentional with your words** - Some of us are naturally very thoughtful with our words. Some of us are not. I encourage you to understand the truth that King Solomon wrote about in the proverb above. Words have the power of life and death. Think about the good you can do with your words. If you don't, your words will control you. And you will reap what you sow. Use your words to bless and encourage. Speak the truth in love.
5. **Silence** - This is my challenge to you. Build times of silence into your day. We are bombarded with so much noise all day long that it is difficult to think. A friend of mine said this morning, "The person who doesn't know how to be silent doesn't know who to speak." Those in my life that give life with their words are thoughtful. They have these times in their day when they are silent. Try it.