

THOUGHT OF THE DAY:

Although the tongue weighs very little, few people are able to hold it.
*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasts great things.
Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles!* James 3:5

Refraining from giving advice may sometimes be the best gift you could give a person.

DO MY WORDS BUILD UP OR TEAR DOWN?

James chapter 3 talks about the untamable tongue and even though the tongue is a little member, its power and influence for good or bad is out of proportion to its size. Words bring death or life—help or hurt—hope or destruction (Proverbs 18:21). Words can open a door of encouragement for the discouraged or slam the door. The book of Proverbs is an excellent resource on the subject of the tongue and spoken words, as is the book of James.

Many comedians today whip out jokes laced with sarcastic remarks that can cut a person to bits. People laugh and regard it as humorous— funny...until the teasing is directed toward them! Often dry humor jokes are directed toward a person in the pretense of "*just joking*", but in reality they are meant to hurt, belittle and tear that person down. Hastily spoken words or words spoken in the heat of anger likewise do damage to the person on the receiving end.

Proverbs 15:4 says, *the tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.* Are you an encourager today? Do you use carefully chosen words to build others up rather than tear them down? Proverbs 12:18 say, *reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* The encourager uses words that are soothing, gentle, carefully chosen, and uplifting.

Proverbs 12:23 says, *an anxious heart weights a man down, but a kind word cheers him up* and one of my favorite scriptures is Proverbs 17:22—a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Do you want to be a delight in the sight of God? His word says that *the tongue of the righteous is choice silver...* (Proverbs 10:20). Lord, let our words be choice silver—to build up, not tear down.

We humans have the tendency upon hearing about a disease, any disease, to start telling "*war stories*." I have to admit that I too have told such stories. You know the kind! The old, "*I had a friend that had...and they died!*" NEGATIVE words that do little to comfort a person who is fighting a disease. We do not mean to intentionally hurt the person or cause them more pain, but the "*war stories*" just seem to pop into the mind and we share them without thinking of the damage they may do. People, at such times, need to hear uplifting, cheerful, positive words that ministered to mind, soul and spirit, not negative words.

I was amazed at the stories I heard when people found out I had cancer. The sad part was, I heard more stories about people dying from cancer after losing their battle to fight it, than I did about those who beat it! Such words did not comfort nor help build my faith. It did just the opposite as negative thoughts were dropped into my mind and the enemy came in like a flood using them against me. BUT, God, in His infinite love, mercy and grace, surrounded me with loved ones and friends who spoke positive words into my life that helped me to fight the cancer. I learned to receive the positive and reject the negative. I was truly blessed, comforted and loved through my battle against cancer and I am grateful to proclaim mine is a story of victory. Amen!

My dear friend, Mary, whom God uses as a "Jonathan" in my life, sent me the following words when I was diagnosed five years ago with Breast Cancer. Do you hear her words build up or tear down? You be the judge.

Fear is truly a bully, but I have confidence Katie that you will prevail...remember, God's love casts out all fear so it helps to focus on His faithfulness, dear heart. Compared to what you have conquered, this is a piece of cake. His grace will embrace you and carry you through those times you can't walk. Cancer does not have you; it is only passing through. So chill a bit, take some deep breaths and enjoy the richness of the awesome days ahead. Your life will never be the same as you embrace each day with even more gusto...and your heart will dance a new dance of hope as the good Lord guides and direct you into victory!

Mary's words proved prophetic as I have now been cancer free for five years. It is encouraging for loved ones and friends to minister God's love into the wounded areas of life. It brings forth "good" fruit and as we love one another and bear one another's burden, God will bless our actions. Galatians 6:2 says, "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*"

PRAYER:

Thank You Lord, for Your Word that clearly teaches me how to use my words effectively. I chose to bless and be a light in the lives of others through my words. I love emails; they speak of love, are encouraging, uplifting and pleasing to the heart. Emails bring humorous jokes, stories and pictures that chase the "Blues" away and turn our perspectives around into positive ways.

Thank You, Father, for the encouragers in my life. I love the humor laced throughout my friend Mary's words. They were truly as medicine to my bones. The part I like most about emails—If I don't find an email helpful, I can DELETE It! I like having choices about the words that touch my heart and life! Amen!