

## Devotional: Food For Thought Series

**Title: It Is Not What You Say, But How You Say It!**

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For most of us, with age comes knowledge. With knowledge comes wisdom. To me, wisdom is obtain through the correct application of knowledge in the various situations that we are faced with. Wisdom dictates that we would not use a hammer to swat a fly. We would not stick our hand in an open fire and not expect to be burned. Wisdom keeps us from doing things that are not good for us or doing things that we may or will regret later. This also applies to what we say. We all may have said things, especially in the heat of the moment that we would later regret. We have also said things when we were not provoked and/or were said out of spite, envy or jealousy.

The words that come out of our mouths can be comforting, but also they can have a great negative impact on others. One minute, we can be praising our Father in heaven and in the next instance, we could be condemning our fellow brother. In the book of James starting at chapter 3, he talks about the 'Untamable Tongue'. He compares the tongue, which is a small object to that of a bit that we put in a horse's mouth to control this large animal. He compares the tongue to a rudder, a small object that can control large ships and will steer the ship wherever the pilot desires. In short, stated in **James 3:5 "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things."** Yes, the tongue is a powerful tool that we, as humans possess, but without wisdom, it can be a very dangerous tool.

That being said, I am sure that you have heard the saying, "It is not what you say, but how you say it!" Wisdom dictates that we should all think before we say things, especially during the heat of the moment which translates to when we are upset. We may become upset when things did not go as planned. The loss of a job or income may cause anxiety. We may be going through one of those "NO HE/SHE DIDN'T!!!" moments where we have been wronged by someone causing anger to flare up. Even in these trying times, if wisdom is properly applied, we should take a step back and think before we speak. During my scripture readings, I am reminded that way back in the book of Genesis, God gave us an example of how to respond when our children do something that we told them not to do. He knew that Adam and Eve had disobeyed him earlier that day by eating the forbidden fruit; yet, he waited until evening (**in the cool of the day**), perhaps to reflect and calm down before he had that talk with them. **Genesis 3:8 reads "And they heard a sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."** Well, we know how the story goes, after that talk with God, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, but the point is that God still talked to His children with love though it was tough love.

When things are said out of anger, envy or jealousy; the wayward tongue can affect not only the person that the words are being directed to, but also those who witness or hear what is being said. And yes, even the person who is producing these negative words will be affected. Those who witness such an event, if they are human, will start pondering as to what type of Christian you are supposed to be with the lack of constraint or compassion. Thus, your reputation as a Christian will be tainted and may affect your outreach ministry. As Christians, we should always pause and be asking ourselves, is what I am about to say helping or hurting the situation. **Ephesians 4:29 states "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."**

1. So, when you are angry at someone, does the words coming out of your mouth exhibit grace, edification and forgiveness OR is your tongue spouting hurtful words centered around revenge and hate? With anger on your heart, and saying negative things, are you being a good Christian?

2. So, when you are jealous of someone, what words are coming out of your mouth when you talk to others about that person? Most likely, with jealousy on your heart, you are probably saying things that are not flattering towards the subject of your conversation. Now you are affecting others with your words and you are not painting a good example of yourself, especially if you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught his disciples many things. One of his teachings centered around being more concerned with what is coming out of your mouth as opposed to what is going into your mouth. He explains one of his parables to his disciples in **Matthew 15:16-20** which reads, **16 So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."** This was a powerful message that Jesus gave to his disciples and that they should be careful of what they say. In short, what will defile you is not what goes into your body through your mouth, but what words come from your heart out of your mouth.

Taking time out to think before we say something can sometimes be a challenging task. In order to accomplish this, we must put on the full armor of God as stated in **Ephesians 6:11** **"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."** Putting on this armor requires us to change the way we think and react to different situations. Sometimes before we speak, we should ask, "What would Jesus do?"

#### **In Conclusion:**

We must focus on being a good Christian and a follower of Jesus Christ by exhibiting the list of qualities that I will leave you with which are found in **Colossians 3:12-15** **"12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called one body; and be thankful."**

I pray that you continue to strengthen your relationship with God through your actions of love, respect and honor. Thank you for your time and I would like to thank the church leadership for giving me this opportunity to give this devotional.