

Speaking with Grace

The Gracious Woman of God, Part 2

The Bible has much to say about speech. Basically, it tells us to control our speech, to not just say the things that occur to us without first considering their value and consequences. It also warns us that we can be cursed by our own mouths! As holy women of God, we are called to control our tongues:

Colossians 4:6 ***Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.***

Ephesians 4:29 ***Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.***

Proverbs 31:26 ***She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.***

Proverbs 14:1 ***The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.***

I remember the day God began to work on my ungodly speech. Here is my testimony: It was a dreary Saturday morning, it was cloudy and dark, and I was feeling a bit down. I was cleaning the kitchen from the night before and talking as I cleaned. My husband was sitting near me, reading the paper.

Then I started praying, and suddenly the Lord spoke to me in His still small voice. He asked me to start labeling everything I said as either positive or negative. I wondered, but obeyed. I started listening to myself, and realized that everything I said was negative. It was then I noticed that every time I made a negative remark, my dear spouse's shoulders would slump down a bit. My husband was listening, and it was effecting him, too. At that moment, the Lord opened my eyes, and let me see in the Spirit. I saw dark clouds covering the ceiling of my kitchen, all caused by my negative words. Even worse, I saw demons inhabiting the clouds. I began to repent. I asked the Lord to forgive me for being so negative. I realized my words had consequences.

Here is what the Lord taught me: when I spoke negative words, I was releasing a negative confession spiritually. A dark atmosphere came into my home, something you couldn't see naturally, but that was definitely there. My negative words invited darkness, and that darkness was inhabited by evil. It was darker inside my house than out. Over the next weeks, the Lord took me to the book of Proverbs and asked me to keep track of Scripture about speech. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit*, Proverbs 18:21 said. There were many others. I began pondering how the tongue could bless or curse, and thought about the scripture in Proverbs 14:1 which says, *The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands*. Would I build my house, using positive speech, blessing my husband and children? Or would I pull them down with my negative words? It was a battle, my old self—my flesh--didn't want to obey. But I started to keep track of my speech, asking myself the same question when I spoke, "Was that positive or negative?" After some time, the Lord gave me a further challenge, He asked me to start

labeling my thoughts before I spoke them. I needed to learn to catch my thoughts and judge them before they came out of my mouth—and I also needed to guard what I put into my heart.

I. What our words do the people around us.

Speech can be used to build up, encourage, and give good counsel and wisdom,

Proverbs 10:11 *The mouth of the righteous is a well of life....*

Proverbs 10:13 *Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding*

Proverbs 10:20-21 *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver...The lips of the righteous feed many.*

Proverbs 10:32 *The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable*

Proverbs 15:4 *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life*

Proverbs 15:23 *A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!*

Proverbs 25:11-12 *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.*

Conversely, speech can be used to tear down or destroy,

Proverbs 10:32 *The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.*

Proverbs 12:18 *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

Proverbs 11:9 *The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor*

Proverbs 15:4 *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

>>A Christian has tremendous power to either build up someone or tear them down. Words can encourage or destroy, they can bring life or death.

II. Guard your speech!

The bible tells us to be careful with our words. Don't just blurt something out.

Before you speak, consider its effect!

Proverbs 10:19 *In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.*

Proverbs 12:23 *A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.*

Proverbs 15:28 *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer....*

Proverbs 17:27-28 *He who has knowledge saves his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace, when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.*

Proverbs 21:23 *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*

Proverbs 29:11 *A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.*

Proverbs 29:20 *Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

By our words, we can curse someone, or judge them. Be careful!

Proverbs 11:9 *The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.*

Proverbs 12:6 *The words of the wicked are, "Lie in wait for blood." But the mouth of the upright will deliver them.*

Proverbs 14:3 *In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise will preserve them.*

On the day of judgment—or perhaps even sooner—we will be held accountable for the words we have spoken,

Proverbs 12:13 *The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips*

Proverbs 12:22 *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight.*

Proverbs 13:3 *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

Matthew 12:36-37 [Jesus speaking] *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."* [KJV]

We have three reasons to guard our speech, 1) Our words have an effect on everyone around us; 2) Our words can curse someone, or bring a judgment on them; 3) Unless we repent, we will be judged by God Himself for the ill-considered words we have spoken.

III. What about judgments?

One of our problems with hasty, ill-considered speech is the unrighteous judgments we tend to make. What did Jesus say about judgment?

Luke 6:37 *Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

Jesus was coming against a critical attitude that condemned others—often for the same sins the people themselves were guilty of. Why do we criticize the speck in our brother's eye, when there is a plank in our own eye, Jesus asks, Luke 6:41-42. We have no right to judge the motives of another person's heart. In these cases, God is the judge, not us.

Still, there are times when judgment is required. For example, Paul said **it is the duty of a government to judge evil**, Romans 13:1-7. Also, **church leadership must judge teaching, preaching, words and behavior of the members**, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

BUT don't be hasty to judge, even when it is your duty to judge. Make sure you hear both sides first!

Proverbs 18:13 *He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.*

>>>In other words, make sure you hear the WHOLE story! Realize that the first one to tell their story will seem right—at first. Take the time to listen to the other side as well! Proverbs 18:17 *The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.*

>> That first person is usually telling you a very slanted story. Wait! **If you don't have all the facts first, you will be "without knowledge" and your judgment will be slanted,**

Proverbs 19:2 *Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge, and he sins who hastens with his feet.*

>>**A judgment passed hastily, on the basis of one witness—or even two or three, if you don't hear the other side also—is usually a poor judgment, and can result in destruction. This is sin.**

Also, if you judge—if you are in a position where you must correct—learn to correct by following Christian principles,

1. Correction should be private at first,

Matthew 18:15 [Jesus speaking] *"Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."*

2. One or two more people (witnesses) are told ONLY if the person does not receive correction,

Matthew 15:16 [Jesus continues from verse 15] *"But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'"*

3. The entire church is told ONLY if the person still will not receive correction, and the behavior is considered heinous. Then the person can be asked to leave the church,

Matthew 15:17 *And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

Speaking of correction—let's remember that in the United States, a person has a right to know WHAT they are accused of and WHO is accusing them. They have a right to a fair trial, and they have a right to defend themselves.

Since when does the church believe that it is alright for someone to accuse someone behind their back—and then pass judgment and deliver the sentence, all without that person's knowledge?

Be careful especially if you are judging anyone who is in authority within the church, 1 Timothy 5:18. Be careful!

I have seen people tear churches apart with their ungodly judgments—judgments that were given in secret, until the sentence was served to the unsuspecting person. **ALWAYS** treat pastors with great respect, especially your head pastors, see 1 Timothy 5:17-18. Above all, pray for them!

Here is a lesson the Lord taught me some years ago, regarding our pastors, which I would like to share with you. It is based on Paul's life, where he was stoned and left for dead, in fact, I believe he did die, for he later speaks of seeing heaven, 2 Corinthians 12:2. Paul speaks of it in the third person, "I know a man," but most scholars believe he was speaking about himself. Here is the incident,

*Acts 14:19-20 Then the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there, and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. **However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas....***

As I was meditating on this passage, this is what the Lord said to me, "**Let those who truly love the Lord gather around their leaders. Let them rally to them. Those who have been wounded will be raised up. Those who are discouraged will be set free. And those who are sick in heart will be healed.**"

Let us pray for our pastors, realizing that many rocks and stones are thrown at them in the form of ungodly words and judgments. It is a good thing to pray for the blood of Jesus to cover them from day to day, and to break the curses and unrighteous judgments against them, all in Jesus' name. Also remember that as you bless your pastors, you will be blessed yourself. So pray for them, fight for them, and bless them!

IV. Suggestions for applying these principles.

Children. Do you remember tattling on your brother or sister when you were a kid? Was judgment forthcoming, just on the basis of your testimony? Was that fair? Probably not. **Therefore, never judge on the basis of what one child says against another—it will be slanted testimony.** Remember to get witnesses, if possible, and always remember that until you talk to the other child, you only have part of the story.

Friends. Similarly, don't judge your friends by what one talebearer says about them. Wait! Listen to the one who has been accused, and especially listen to the Lord. Nor is it kind to tell your friend what others are saying about them! IN FACT, BY CARRYING THE JUDGMENT TO THEM, YOU ARE SERVING THE ABUSE. **If** you have to make a judgment, then probe gently. Otherwise, just listen. And be kind. Remember that love always believes the best, Proverbs 10:12; 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

Marriage. NEVER allow anyone else to know something about your husband that you were upset at. (The exception to this is if you are seeking godly advice from a trusted mentor who will not spread gossip around the church.) **Correction is supposed to be private, always,** unless there is good reason to bring something heinous to a higher authority. Would you enjoy it if he spread ungodly words about you? Or told others your faults and failings? Then don't do it to him either. Be the wise woman who builds her house, not the foolish one who pulls it down with her hands—her ungodly words, Proverbs 14:1.

If you feel you must correct your husband, may I suggest these eight steps,

1. **Correct privately**, when no one else is around.
2. **Be sure that you are *calm***. If you are emotional, you may be misinterpreted, or you may lose control. So stay calm. Try to pick a time when he is calm also.
3. **Use the “positive-PROBLEM-positive” “sandwich” pattern**. Explain the problem between two positive statements. Each of these two statements must be something that is positive and true. For example, “You know that I love you. I admire you in so many ways, you are so good at ____ (tell him something good about himself).”
4. **State the problem between the two positives. Also, your words will be far more effective if you avoid the words, “You always,” and “You never.”** These words would make anyone defensive, and keep them from listening. You want your problem to be heard. **So start with what you feel**, because your emotions are always valid. **Take your husband on the journey with you. Explain the problem and how that made you feel.**
5. **Always end your “sandwich” with a positive statement.** Believe the best about your husband, and you will see his best.
6. **Ask for his input.** Believe that he loves you enough to see the problem, and will help you find a solution. Most men have very good hearts.
7. **Listen to all input. When he does come up with a solution, be sure to reward it. Tell him what is good about it. Don’t shoot it down!** Work together to improve it. Remember that you are working on the problem, not on him. The focus is the problem, and you are working on it together.
8. **Reward everyone who helps solve the problem with good words—words of appreciation and affirmation.** Say “thank you,” “I appreciate that so much,” and give hugs.

In summary, here is the pattern, “PPP—ALR”

Positive true statement about him

Problem statement and how that problem makes you **feel**.

Positive statement, affirming him.

Ask for input.

Listen

Reward

Here is an example. Suppose you are upset that you come home from work night after night, prepare dinner, and then everyone runs off to watch TV or do homework, leaving you alone in the kitchen with a stack of dirty dishes. You realize that you are not a happy mama, and decide to try to do something about it. Here is a possible scenario. You go to your husband privately (after the dishes are done), and ask him if you can talk to him in private. Then you go somewhere private, where the kids won’t overhear. When you get there, remember the sandwich! Start with something positive—and true—about him. Maybe it goes something like this,

“You know that I love you. You have such a good heart, and you are so good with the kids. I have always respected that. [Here comes the problem statement] But recently, I have been feeling so tired. I get home from work feeling so wrung out. I know we need to eat, so I cook, and I’m really happy I can do that. But then everyone leaves, and I

feel overwhelmed with all the dishes and clean up. [Back to a positive, affirming statement] I know you love me, and you are good at thinking things through. [Now ask him for his input] What do you think? Do you have a solution?”

Give your husband a chance to tell you how he sees the problem. Be sure to keep the discussion neutral—it is not your problem, or his problem, it is a problem, something you both are challenged by.

Listen to all input. When he does come up with a solution, be sure to reward it. Tell him what is good about it. Don't shoot it down! Give good words, affirming words. If there is a problem with that solution, then point that out, even while affirming what is good about the solution. “Yes, that could work, but—“ Work together to solve the problem.

When a solution is reached and shared with the kids later, be sure that it is a solution you are both behind. **When it comes to kids or relatives, resent a united front, always!**

Last—reward everyone who helps solve the problem with good words—words of appreciation and affirmation. If the solution was that EVERYONE has to help with dishes and clean up, then make sure that clean up is a happy time. Give hugs all around! Say thank you! Tell them how much they have helped you, and how happy you are for the help!

V. How to use speech for good.

Any Christian has the power to influence others by their speech, but I believe that this is even more true for Christian women. We have the power to bless or curse, to encourage or discourage, to tear down or destroy, to root out or plant—all by our speech, by the words that come out of our own mouths.

So why don't we use our influence for good?

I believe that part of our challenge in giving good words to others is that **we don't believe that we deserve good words ourselves. We judge ourselves. We are critical, harsh, and we tear ourselves down.** Then we turn around and tear everyone around us down as well. “If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy” is too true in too many households.

So why don't we start with ourselves? And better yet, why don't we start with the Lord? Here are some suggestions for giving yourself the words of appreciation and affirmation you need to hear,

1. **Ask yourself, what does the Lord say about me?** Here is where your day to day study of the Bible will help you tremendously. Collect verses that talk about God's love for you, how He sees you, and what He plans for you. These are treasures, for they are His affirming words to you—words of life and truth.

2. **Do more than collect verses. Put them on notecards or other small cardstock. Post them around your home. Say them aloud to yourself daily.** If you have been torn down since you were little, you need to hear someone say good words about you. Be that someone for yourself. Affirm yourself. Appreciate yourself.
3. **STOP LISTENING TO THE ENEMY.** Too many times when I have prayed for one of my sisters in Christ, I have sensed her broken spirit—and then seen hordes of demons behind her tormenting her with lies. Scripture says, “Resist the enemy and he will flee from you,” James 4:7. Resist the enemy out loud, in Jesus’ name. Resist them every time you hear negative words about yourself, even if they start with the word, “I.” The enemy can project thoughts into your head, and if the thought starts with the word “I”, you’ll think it came from yourself. Often it doesn’t—it’s a lie straight out of the pit of hell. Nor does the Holy Spirit EVER tear down one of His children. He convicts, but that is different from condemnation. The enemy condemns, they make you believe there is no hope. God’s conviction draws you closer to Him, and gives you hope, because you know that if you confess your sin, He will forgive you completely, 1 John 1:9.
4. **Seek out positive people and positive friendships, people who will appreciate you and build you up. Conversely, spend less time with the people who tear you down. Forgive them. Pray for them. Bless them. But spend very little time with them, if possible.**
5. **Put good things into your heart, and avoid negative TV, newscasts, literature, music, or other experiences.** "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," Jesus told us in Matthew 12:34. Ask, what are you putting into your heart? Be sure it is good, positive and affirming—and not bad.

Children. Children are like sponges, they soak up the atmosphere around them. Why not make that atmosphere as positive as possible? Here are some suggestions,

1. **Look for things to praise, appreciate and affirm in every child around you. Pay special attention to every child.** Sometimes the most challenging kids are that way because they need your love the most. Give it to them. Look into their eyes, even get down on their level and say good things—and true things—about them.
2. **Notice and reward good behavior, good grades, good habits and good attitudes.** If you only pay attention to bad behavior and complaints, what are you rewarding? **Pay more attention to the good, and less to the bad.**
3. **Get them to laugh.** This more than anything else can change the atmosphere in your home. Don’t laugh at them, or at anyone else. But find things to laugh at together—cartoons, funny things that happen, the silly behavior of your pets, or funny things that happen to you. Try to get them to laugh at least three times a day. Have a happy home, where laughter happens often.

Husbands or Boyfriends. I believe the men are much more affected by women's attitudes than we know. Just try being grumpy around them and what happens? They flee! And rightfully so! Here are some suggestions for a happy relationship,

1. **Look for things to praise, appreciate and affirm in your spouse or boyfriend.** To be effective, your words must both be **true and sincere**. Ask, what do you truly appreciate about your spouse? Tell him. Say something positive to him at least once a day—and sometimes much more often.
2. Men are greatly affected by how you feel about the things they provide for you. Therefore, **tell them how much you appreciate the things they provide**. Be thankful. If they take you out to eat, or on vacation, or even for a walk, thank them, and **let them know you are having a good time**.
3. **Pay attention when your spouse does something kind for you or another person, and acknowledge their kindness.** They deserve the praise.
4. **“Let things slide” when it comes to the small things that aren't so wonderful.** How would you feel if someone picked on you all the time? They hate it. If something really bothers you, then use the steps for correction written above in these notes. But do this sparingly.
5. **Laugh together.** Don't laugh at them, or at any other person, but laugh with them. Most men love humor. Find things to laugh at together. Look for the humorous side of a situation.

Suggestions for Growth.

This week, continue the three assignments from last week: read everyday, pray everyday, meditate on the word everyday.

In addition, practice what you have learned in these notes. Realize that often understanding does not come until you actually do something (see Psalm 111:10). Here are some suggestions,

1. **Affirm yourself in some way everyday.** For the most powerful affirmations, use the word of God. These words are living and active, and will truly bless your heart.
2. **Affirm someone around you everyday.** Challenge yourself to say something positive to people around you. Look for the good things. Be sincere, and also kind. Be gracious. What does it cost to give affirming words to someone else? Almost nothing. But it is a treasure to them.
3. **If you are married,** consider the suggestions for having a happy relationship. **Incorporate positive words—affirming words, appreciative words—into your relationship.**
4. **Laugh. Make it a habit to laugh together with others everyday!**

DON'T STOP! Make it a habit to be a positive, happy, appreciative person!

Good habits are formed, and once you have started a good habit, you can then go on to make it a lifestyle.

Here is the Wikipedia definition of a habit,

“A habit, from the standpoint of psychology, is a more or less fixed way of thinking, willing, or feeling acquired through previous repetition of a mental experience.”

Repetition makes habits! **According to Wikipedia, it takes 66 days of repetition to form a new habit, one that you do automatically.**

Sixty six days is a lot—more than two months. But suppose we try this?

Imagine a lifestyle of being a positive, uplifting, encouraging, happy person.

What would your life be like then? Write about it:
