



Head to Heart
Restoration Ministry

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The Power of Words

“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” I believe this is one of the greatest lies we have ever told ourselves and others. As a counselor, I have spent years helping people receive healing for the wounds of words. Bones often heal much quicker than words.

The greater level of authority that someone has in our lives, the more deeply their words can wound us. For this reason, most often the deepest wounds come from our parents. Critical words such as, “You are so stupid”, “You are so lazy you’ll never amount to anything”, “Can’t you do anything right?”, “Aren’t you ashamed?” often said in anger or frustration can impact a person’s self-esteem for years beyond the comments made.

Often, as an adult people live out the comments or wounds they received as children. They may be extremely intelligent and successful, yet constantly tell themselves that they are stupid and worthless. They find it almost impossible to receive the acceptance and encouragement that others give. Each compliment is responded to with words that negate what was said.

The wounds of words can also lead to a performance-based view of God. You may be trapped in the cycle of thinking that God’s love and acceptance is based on how well you “perform.” The mindset that you must meet every need and follow every man-made rule in order to be approved by God causes false guilt and shame because you can never do enough to earn the approval that is already there. Our desire to serve God and others should come from a heart of love and compassion and not out of fear of losing approval.

“Hurt people hurt people.” It is a sad fact that the people that are most hurt and wounded by the words of others often keep the cycle alive by in turn hurting others. Instead of seeking help and learning how to release the wounds of words in healthy ways, the release comes by lashing out at others. Unfortunately, this not only hurts others, it does not bring about lasting release. The result is greater pain and lower self-esteem.

So how do we heal the wounds that have already occurred and stop the cycle of wounding others? We begin to heal by acknowledging the wounds are real and not trying to justify them as “not important.” Release forgiveness to those who wounded us. Begin to learn and believe what God’s word says about you. Begin to affirm yourself that you are loveable, valuable, capable and forgivable.

As adults it is easy to look at the wounds of words and try to justify that they really did not hurt that bad. The reality is that as an adult if you continue to remember the words spoken and feel the sting of the wound, it is still impacting your life. Acknowledge the hurt.

Releasing forgiveness comes in the decision to no longer hold the person hostage to the wound. Forgiveness is not an acknowledgment that what was spoken was OK. Just as Jesus has forgiven you, you in turn forgive others.



Jesus paid the price for all of our sin. He opened the door for us to fully receive God's love, acceptance and approval. Take time to meditate on scriptures that affirm how God sees you. Find a list of scriptures related to who you are in Christ and allow the Word of God to transform how you view yourself.

Replace negative self-talk with life affirming words of encouragement. We all make mistakes but we are not defined by them. Shift your focus off of your mistakes and failures. Tell yourself daily that you are loved and approved of by God just like you are. If you feel stuck or the wounds seem too deep to resolve on your own, seek help from a qualified Pastoral Counselor.

Become aware of the words you speak to others especially when angry or frustrated. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful in building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Ephesians 4:29. By encouraging others, affirming that they are loveable, valuable, capable and forgivable, you play a role in releasing them from their own wounds caused by words.

Oh, and the next time you hear the childhood rhyme, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words can never hurt me" take the opportunity to turn this into a teachable moment to share the truth that words often have a long lasting impact on our lives.

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