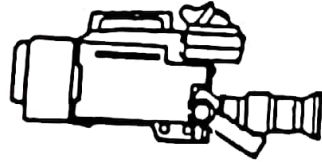


Trinity Temple Times

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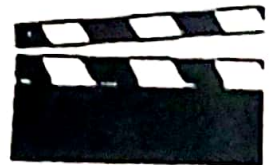
SPECIAL EDITION:

This edition features part one of a two part essay on how our speech can affect us. -----D. Madkins

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What's in a Word?

Speech Affects us All

By: deartra d. madkins

It started with three or four people shouting the insulting phrase, but by the end of the first half, everyone in the gymnasium was shouting it.

Russell, the star point guard for the opposing university's basketball team was shooting foul shots. The home team was down by six points. The home crowd had devised a way to make the star nervous. As Russell went to shoot his first free throw, the crowd began to shout, "Russell sucks, Russell sucks." Russell missed both free throw attempts. During the course of the game, the crowd continued to chant, "Russell sucks." Towards the end of the game, someone stated, "Russell is going to have to go see his shrink after this game."

Ephesians 4:29 and 31 states in the *Today's English Version Bible*,

"Do not use harmful words in talking. Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. ..." (Good News, 1971.)

The Bible states that saying negative or derogatory things to people is wrong, but we still do it. Clearly in the example above, there were harmful words being used. Those words were not helpful, kind, and they would not build anyone up. If we are to use words that will be beneficial to people, then why are we all guilty of saying things that will hurt peoples feelings.

"Words can kill. They attack our self-esteem, curse our futures, and stamp lethal labels on our lives" (Ketterman, 1992.) They can cause all kinds of

emotions that include rejection, isolation, and terror among others. Words and non-verbal messages do more damage than physical violence.

Types of Verbal Communication

There are many different types of verbal communications that can affect us. Five of these will be discussed. They are as follows:

- ⊙ Verbal aggression,
- ⊙ Verbal abuse,
- ⊙ Labeling,
- ⊙ Negative speech, and
- ⊙ Positive speech.

Verbal Aggression

"...Because of its destructiveness, verbal aggression is an important form of communication" (Infante, January 1995.)

Verbal aggression can be defined as words used that assault a person's self-image in order to render psychological pain. "The 'psychological pain' specified in the definition refers to feelings of inadequacy, humiliation, depression, despair, hopelessness, embarrassment, and anger" (Infante.) This is a very important definition because a great deal of negative phrases come from verbal aggression.

According to Dominic Infante in "Teaching Students to Understand and Control Verbal Aggression," there are various types of verbal aggressive messages. They are as follows.

Verbal Abuse

There is a saying that kids use to say—
"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but
words will never harm them." This statement
is not true at all. Words can hurt you!!!

"When Archie Bunker called Edith a ding-dad and admonished her, "Stille yourself," we laughed. But in real life, verbal is anything but funny" (Seligmann, October 12, 1992)

Verbal abuse can be defined as "any form of transmitted verbal message that [a person] reports as offensive, threatening, rude, embarrassing, or aversive" (Yelisma, Winter 1995.) Most abusers use words to belittle, punish, or to control a person. They use words to hurt people or to make them feel bad about themselves. It relies on the power of words to hurt and control a person. Verbal abuse can eventually lead to the following feelings.

- ⊙ *Depression.* This having a low spirit or life. It also consists of having feelings of dejection and melancholy.
- ⊙ *Hopelessness.* This is having feelings of despair and discouragement.
- ⊙ *Humiliation.* This is having low pride, self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, and feelings of inferiority.
- ⊙ *Inadequacy.* This is having feelings of insecurity, incompetence, or weakness.

Verbal abuse can take many forms of expression and words. It can take the form of the following.

- ⊙ *Anger.* This is feelings of sudden and strong displeasure and discord towards a person.
- ⊙ *Constant judging or challenging.* This is constantly threatening, provoking, and objecting to a person.
- ⊙ *Ridicule.* This consists of words intended to provoke mean laughter at or feelings toward another person.
- ⊙ *Undermining.* This is threatening a person or damaging what they are trying to do.
- ⊙ *Zingers disguised as jokes.* These are cracks about a person. When the person who is being talked about shows hurt feelings about the jokes, the reply is, can't you take a joke (Seligmann, October 12, 1992)

Verbal abuse is usually said compulsively and constantly. It is said with no remorse or apology. Verbal abuse can make a person feel so bad that they can not imagine themselves in a positive light. It may take something short of a miracle to get over the abuse. Let's look at a situation that shows how verbal abuse can affect a person.

Montoya and her angel

When Montoya attended elementary school, the kids teased her and told her she was ugly. They called her Montoya, the monster. She hated that name. She would often go home crying. When she would tell her family what was wrong, they would just reply, "Those kids are just playing with you." Montoya did not like the way the kids played with her.

Montoya went through high school and the first year of college thinking she was ugly. All the kids had called her ugly in her early years. No one had really ever told her differently. She believed she was ugly. Montoya did not begin to think she was attractive until the Lord sent her an angel to confirm that she was attractive.

According to Montoya, "I don't really know whether the guy was an angel or not, but to me he will always be an angel. There was a musical being held at a very big church. It seated about 1,000 people. The group of people that I was sitting with were sitting on one side of the church and the guy was sitting on the other side of the church. He was playing the drums. Somehow, some way, across that crowded church our eyes met.

During the offering, some of the members of the group I was with went to the rest room. (The hallway to the rest room of the church was very long.) As we were walking to go back to our seats, he walked by us. He and I stared at each other until we could no longer see each other. After I could no longer see him because of the big crowd of people, I turned around to see if I could see him. Despite that crowd, I could see him still looking at me.

Every since the day I saw my angel I have never again thought I was ugly. Now everyone says I'm concated."

This is a true story. Although the guy may not have really been an angel, it took an event like an angel appearing for Montoya to realize that she was attractive. From about ages 8 to 18, Montoya really believed she was one of the ugliest people on the face of the earth because she was told that she was ugly.

Montoya should have been told that she was not ugly. This would have give her some assurance. The children should have also bee reprimanded, although it may have not helped much. Montoya needed to hear something positive.

According to Proverbs 16:24, "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Good News, 1971.)

their spiritual growth has been hampered. She also stated that many times that the Deacon, Mother, Deaconess, or Benchmember of the church should just be quiet or let a pastor or elder say something to the saint. Although many saints have brushed the hurt to the back of their minds and forgotten it, the hurt can still war their minds and hamper their spiritual growth.

People other than pastors, elders, or other people of authority should be careful when speaking to other members, especially new converts or members. You should be lead by the Lord when speaking to people on a spiritual level. The pastor or elders might be able to say something that another member could not say, without hurting a new convert or member. Let's examine how speech effects us spiritually.

Boston and Sis. Benchmember

Boston had recently gotten saved. He was living the best he knew how. Boston liked to listen to instrumental jazz because he played the trumpet. He saw nothing wrong with it.

Sis. Benchmember happened to find out from another member that Boston liked to listen to jazz. She went up to Boston after one service and openly denounced his listening to jazz. Everybody heard her. She told him that he was not saved and that he was going straight to hell.

Boston was so hurt and ashamed by this that he did not return to church after that. Boston has been to church about three times in the past five years, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Easter.

Clearly in the example above, Boston's spirit man was seriously wounded. He could have been spoken to differently. When speaking to someone in the church world, you should be careful how you do it. Although the Bible says, "Rebuke openly, that others may fear," it is not always expedient to do so. You must be spiritually lead by God, to know how to approach and speak to someone.

Emotionally

"Negative messages from the parent, coupled with the child's negative self-talk, become stored in the child's memory and continue to negatively reinforce his perceptions" (Keith-Oaka)

Speech can affect a person emotionally. Negative speech can lead to the following.

- A loss of self-realization.
- A barrier to interaction with people.
- A reflection on the ability to succeed
- An invalidation of feelings.

- Feelings of being unloved, unwanted, incapable, and insecure (Keith-Oaka)

The emotional effects of speech are not visible, but they last a long time. Most of the time the emotional damage is not intentional. Emotional abuse exacts a very heavy toll. The victims can suffer a lifetime. The negative self-images acquired can hinder their work, social, and love life. The emotional aspect of verbal abuse can be hard to treat.

While bad speech can bring bad emotional pain, good speech can bring emotional stability to a person who needs it. It can boost their self-confidence, make them feel loved and wanted. It can make them feel secure. Let's look at an example of how speech can affect a person emotionally.

Toronto and Jane

Toronto and Jane were boyfriend and girlfriend. They had been dating for three months. Toronto was known for being shy, quiet, and introverted. He never got angry. He never raised his voice or his fists.

After awhile Jane began to tell Toronto that he was a wimp. She also told him that he was not a man because he did not fight. Jane would instigate confrontations just to see what Toronto would do. Toronto would never get mad and fight. He would just talk to the person and get them to calm down. This would upset Jane. She would tease Toronto even more.

Jane kept calling Toronto names. Eventually, they broke up. From then on Toronto felt bad about himself and he never had another healthy relationship with the opposite sex.

Toronto was emotionally scarred. He could not function emotionally in a relationship. The emotional damage made Toronto become more shy and withdrawn. Positive speech could have helped Toronto become more extroverted and assertive. Positive speech could have also focus on the fact that Toronto could walk a way from a fight without retaliating.

Psychologically

"...It's hard for me to feel happy... My mind is playing tricks on me..." (The Ghetto Boys.)

Abuse can be done both psychologically and physically. The hurt that we feel on the inside is what can hurt us the most. The psychological abuse is much more difficult to deal with than physical abuse. An abused child could become an abusive parent.

"...Children retain the negative messages, as well as the accompanying pain and humiliation,

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Labeling

Labeling begins when we are children and follows us until we die.

Labeling can be defined as branding a person with a word that describes their actions, mannerisms, features, looks, attitude, or demeanor.

There is an important realization that needs to be discussed. That realization is...

"Few of us escape being saddled with a label as we grew up. Now that we are adults, we may laugh them off, but we can't deny their perpetual influence on our self-regard, our love life, or work life, perhaps most pointedly, our lives as mothers [parents]" (Glass, August 1993.)

Labels reflect family experiences and attitudes passed down and given to a child. These labels can be enduring as well as divide siblings and estrange relationships. "Labeling kids as opposites may seem like a way to cut down on squabbles, but often all it does is make each child feel insecure and unbalanced" (Glass.) Labels can make children think they are dumb, ugly, lazy, or shy when they really are not. Most kids that are labeled with negative labels grow up to honor their assigned roles.

Labels are a failure to see what potential a person may have. Labeling children is not a good idea because children are very susceptible to their parents' judgment of them. The words that children are told are taken to heart because the parents are so influential and important in their lives. Labeling a child can cause lasting damage to any child.

Parents may judge or label their children because they are worried about how the child will turn out. Parents want to shame the child into better behavior. Labels are also used when parents are startled or mad.

We are labeled by other people also. These people may be family members, friends, other children, and the child itself. When a child or person is given a label, tell them that they do not have to accept that label.

A young minister (21 years old) was speaking at a youth program. During the course of his sermon, he told the young people, "If your parents tell you that you can't do something or call you by a negative label, tell them that they are a lie, because the Bible says, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

This is a bold statement coming from such a young man, but it is very true. It was enough to touch one parent's nerves. When the parents were asked to give remarks at this same service, one mother stood up and said, "...I would tell my kids that they could not do something or call them something negative so that they would do the opposite of what I said. I never said it to belittle them." Although this parent may have not said

the negative things to belittle her children, the children may have felt humiliated.

We are all guilty of labeling people. "He is so lazy" "She is so bad" "He ain't gonna never be nothing" "You are a dummy" We have all heard them and we have all said them. Let's look at an example of labeling.

Stacey and Tracey

Stacey and Tracey were identical twins. Both twins were capable of performing well in school and they were both cute. Stacey was a little bit in school than Tracey. Tracey was slightly cuter than Stacey. Their mother in an effort to point out the good qualities of both girls would introduce them as, "Stacey, the smart one and Tracey, the pretty one." Stacey once said, "My mother thought she was doing good, but while we were growing up, I thought I was ugly and Tracey thought she was dumb."

Stacey and Tracey's mother thought that by focusing on each twin's good points, that each twin would feel special, but this did not work. This only made each twin feel bad about themselves.

Negative Speech

James 3:8, "But the human tongue can be tamed by no man. It is an (undisciplined, irreconcilable) restless evil, full of death-bringing poison" (Comparative, 1984.)

Negative speech can be defined as a statement that is highly critical and lacks positive, affirmative, or encouraging features. Everyone has said something negative to someone or about someone. The negative things we say can hurt people.

Negative speech is said on a daily basis. It can be said as we walk by someone whose attire we do not like, as we drive by someone whose driving we do not approve of, or even while we are sitting in church. Many times we mumble things under our breath and people do not hear it. Sometimes we say things to other people when the party who is being talked about is not there. On occasion, we get bold and say something to the person's face.

The negative things we say to people can have negative effects. The person may rebel and do something unseemingly. The person may go into a shell. The person may even become bitter and hateful.

The negative things said can have positive effects. The person may prove the naysayers wrong. This does not happen often.

Let's look at some examples of the effects of negative speech.

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Continued on page 7

Negative speech can have negative affects

Jimmy

Jimmy was always being told that he was going to be like his father, that he was stupid, and that he would never "amount" to anything by his family. (Jimmy's father was an alcoholic with a criminal record and no job.) Jimmy did not do well in school and was always in trouble.

Jimmy's mother often told him that he used the things that were said to him as a crutch. Jimmy received very little positive encouragement. Jimmy quit going to school, began to run with a gang, stole cars, and smoked marijuana. When Jimmy was about 11 years old, someone asked him why he acted the way he did. His reply, "Like father, like son." This is a very sad commentary, a very sad commentary.

Negative speech can have positive affects

Jana

Jana's mother and father were divorced. Jana had decided to go and live with her father so that she could obtain her college education. When Jana told everyone that she was going to go live with her father, there were many negative responses. She was told... she was the worst daughter ever for leaving her mother, she would never succeed, her father was no good, her father had never done anything for her, and that she would end up pregnant. Most of these things were said by church folk who professed to be saints.

Jana was very upset by the things that were said to her. Being the stubborn person that she was, she purposed in her heart to prove all of these people wrong.

Jana at this present time has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and is working on her Masters of Business Administration degree.

Positive Speech

Proverbs 15:23 states, "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" (Comparative, 1984.)

Positive speech can have positive affect on people. As it states in Proverbs 15:23, a word spoken at the right time can do some good. People can say something positive and lift a person's spirit. A positive word can make someone feel better about themselves. A positive word can let a person know that they are loved. A positive word can let a person know that they

are special. Let's look at some examples of positive speech.

Chandler and his mother

Everyday before Chandler's mother dropped him off at school, she would say a short prayer. It included the following lines: "Lord, make him the head and not the tail. Give him favor with the teachers and the students. Let him know that he can do all things through Christ which strengthens him."

All the teachers and students at Chandler's school liked him. They thought he was a good student and a good role model. He was well respected and many students asked for his advice. Chandler graduated at the top of his high school class.

The prayer had a lot to do with Chandler being the type of person that he was. The positive speech had a lot to do with it also. Chandler once said, "I know the prayer helped me because prayer is always major help, but I wanted to be the best and do the best because I knew that my mother had confidence in me. Positive speech brings out the good things in people."

The Effects of Speech

Speech can affect us in a number of ways. The things that are said to a person can help them or hurt them. Speech can affect us in the following ways.

- ① Spiritually,
- ② Emotionally, and
- ③ Psychologically.

Spiritually

In Proverbs, Solomon depicted speech as a powerful weapon that can be used for good or bad. Good speech brings about good things to man. It also praises God. It is not blunt and hasty. It is thoughtful. It is used to preserve life and provide help. Good speech is a means of satisfaction, prosperity, joy, and pleasantness. It overcomes impossible barriers.

According to Proverbs, bad speech brings curses and destruction to man. It also curses God. It leads to destruction, evil, distrust, and anger.

Speech effects our spirit man. It can build it up or tear it down. It can drive a people from church or draw people to church. It can hinder or help our spirit man.

In a sermon at a Women's Day program, the guest evangelist said that many of today's saints have been raped in the church. She said that some Deacon, Mother, Deaconess, or Benchmember of the church had said something to a particular saint in the wrong tone, manner, or at the wrong time. This has adversely affected the saints. Many saints have left churches or

- ① *Attacking a person's significant other.* This consists of saying something negative about a person's significant other.
- ② *Background attacks.* These consist of attacking a person's credentials, education, family, or accomplishments.
- ③ *Blame.* This consists of finding fault with a person.
- ④ *Character attacks.* These consist of attacking a person's reputation.
- ⑤ *Commands.* This consists of dominating a person.
- ⑥ *Competence attacks.* These consist of assaulting a person's abilities.
- ⑦ *Malediction.* This consists of slandering a person.
- ⑧ *Negative comparison.* This consists of comparing a person to something negative.
- ⑨ *Personality attacks.* These consist of assaulting a person's character.
- ⑩ *Physical appearance attacks.* These consist of assaulting or disapproving of a person's physical appearance.
- ⑪ *Ridicule.* This consists of using words intended to evoke disrespectful laughter at a person.
- ⑫ *Swearing.* This consists of using fowl language in front of a person who does not use it.
- ⑬ *Teasing.* This consists of making fun of a person or cracking jokes about a person.
- ⑭ *Threats.* This consists of intimidating a person (Infante.)

Why do people send messages that they know will hurt people's feelings? There are several reasons why verbal aggression occurs. Here are the basic eleven causes of verbal aggression according to Dominic Infante.

- ① *Argumentative skill insufficiency.* This is assaulting other people personally out of frustration without being able to effectively attack their position.
- ② *Being in a bad mood.* This is when you are just in a bad mood and you want everyone to suffer.
- ③ *Disdain.* These are verbal attacks that express hate.
- ④ *Just wanting to be mean.* This is being evil just because you want to be.
- ⑤ *Mimicking a TV or well-known star.* This is imitating an actor, a TV character, a sports star, a rapper, or some other celebrity.

- ⑥ *Psychopathology.* This is transference where a person attacks people because they remind the of a source of unresolved hurt.
- ⑦ *Social learning.* This is experiencing direct or indirect rewards for verbal aggressive behavior.
- ⑧ *Trying to be funny.* This is trying to be amusing when it is inappropriate or in bad taste.
- ⑨ *Trying to look tough.* This is acting thuggish or trying to look tough when you are not.
- ⑩ *Trying to save face.* This is attacking someone because they attacked you (Infante.)

There are two basic effects of verbal aggression. They are self-esteem damage and aggression escalation. Self-esteem damage results in a injured self-esteem and self-esteem problems. Aggression escalation is aggression that gets worse and worse. These effects tend to lead to reduced trust, a deteriorated relationships, and relationships that eventually end. Let's look at an example of verbal aggression.

Seattle and Detroit

Seattle and Detroit were friends and college roommates. They had been friends for about 3 months. Detroit had a habit of arguing all the time. He had to always be right no matter what the subject was. His point was always important and no one else's was. If Detroit could not win the argument fairly, he would result to name calling and ridiculing the other person. He would make threats and tease people. If Detroit hated someone, they would know it.

Seattle asked Detroit why he had to win every argument. Detroit said that he did not argue, he just had discussion. When Seattle would ask Detroit why he would talk about people and make fun of them, Detroit would get upset and leave.

After awhile, Seattle began to dislike Detroit. Seattle tried to tell Detroit that he was becoming annoyed with Detroit, but it did not help. Seattle decided to no longer be friends with Detroit. Detroit began to spread rumors about Seattle. Things got so bad that Seattle had to leave college.

Clearly, Detroit had a problem and it should have been addressed. Detroit failed to see his problem because in the past no one pointed his problem out to him or because he did not care. Detroit should have been more sensitive to other people's feelings.

as hidden memories, and those experiences frequently turn abused children into abusive parents" (Jenish.)

A person who is psychologically abused may exhibit the following:

- ① Feelings of ridicule, degradation, and shame.
- ② May become unfeeling, unsympathetic, and self-centered.
- ③ May become verbally abusive themselves.
- ④ May become withdrawn.
- ⑤ May become isolated.
- ⑥ May have low self-esteem.
- ⑦ May feel incompetent.

A person's mind can play all kinds of tricks on them. The people who are told negative things about themselves begin to believe them. "One woman whose husband constantly told her she was fat... When she went shopping, she would try on clothes four sizes too big—and couldn't figure out why they didn't look right" (Anonymous.) Let's look at an example of how speech affects a person psychologically.

Charlotte and Orlando

Orlando are brother and sister. Orlando had a habit of making faces and snickering when he thought something was ugly or messed up. Charlotte knew that he had this habit.

Charlotte and Orlando cracked jokes and made fun of each other and other people all the time. They never really thought much of it. Charlotte did however dislike it when Orlando would make faces and snicker at her. She knew what that meant. Orlando would tell her that he was playing with her, but she always felt pain when he did it.

Charlotte once told Orlando how she felt. He just shrugged his shoulder and said, "Whatever." Orlando still snickers and makes face. Charlotte still feels hurt when he does it.

The psychological pain that people feel is real. What you think may not hurt, may in fact hurt. The psychological pain that Charlotte felt was real. Orlando chose to ignore it because he knew he was joking with Charlotte. They were brother and sister and brothers and sisters were suppose to fight, joke, and carry on. Charlotte did not feel the same way about the snickering. Orlando could have been more sensitive to Charlotte's feelings.

Colossians 3:8 states in the New American Standard Bible, "But now you also put also them aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and

abusive speech from your mouth" (Comparative.)

We should use positive speech. Even if we have to chastise someone, we should do it without using negative words. Telling someone they are stupid, dumb, lazy, ugly, a mistake, or mean will not help. A good word spoken in due season can help a person greatly. Before you say something that might hurt someone's feelings, think about how you would feel if someone said it to you.

No one knows if Russell (the basketball star) had to go to therapy or not. If the truth be told, none of the people supporting the home team really even cared. It was fun to heckle Russell and the home team won the game. None the less, Russell was probably hurt after the game. Words do hurt, even though at times we do not want to admit it.

To be Continued on next Issue