

Open with marriage story – sassy – tone – words sent a message like get off your butt and help me.

Sometimes we learn the hard way right. But after 40+ years on this planet and 16 years of marriage I do know one thing for sure. It only takes a few words, said at the right time, at the right moment, to take your relationship in a direction that is not good.

And it's not just in marriage – it's our relationships with the people we work with; it's our relationships with our kids – our friends. The same thing can happen - just a few words and suddenly you're going in a direction that you don't want to go.

For some of you it happened on your way to church this morning. Ask an innocent question and the next thing you know it's World War III. You're screaming – he's screaming- the kids are crying. You're like "We're not going to church anymore."

Why? What the heck just happened?

Words happened. Because just a few, said at the right time, can take a relationship to a place that we don't want it to go – One minute our relationships are on course, on cruise control, lookin' good and the next second we're headed off the cliff.

Kinda like Toonces the Cat who can drive. Some of you remember Toonces, but for those of you who don't

(Watch the Toonces video by clicking the Video button in the app.)

That's where our relationships are headed when we don't watch our words.

It can happen that quick. A snarky comment – a cold response – sarcastic reply - just a few words and (zoom) suddenly the relationship goes south.

It's because Words. Have. Power.

Something we're going to take a look at this morning - what does God's word say about the power of words because we know from experience that words can hurt. Married people, listen up, this topic has the power to transform your relationship – transform the climate in your family.

If you're a STUDENT – or if you're SINGLE ... or maybe in a relationship that may be HEADING TOWARD MARRIAGE – this is so cool for you – because you get to get this right from the START ... instead of catching it when there's a lot of repair to be done.

When a man & a women get married and stand at the altar – you're were excited – happy – the only words you wanted to say were "I do".

But what happens – life, the daily grind, living in close proximity with another's irritating habits. Suddenly your perfect bride – your perfect groom is uh-oh – REAL. And real life is hard. So when the euphoria wears off it becomes easier to say things we don't mean out of frustration, anger or disappointment.

And of course this is true in every relationship....so whether your single, married, divorced, a youngster – we all need to remember that words have the power to hurt.

The old English nursery rhyme,” Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me”

Is stupid! It’s just not true. It’s totally ridiculous, because words can hurt.

Every one of us has a story of someone saying something hurtful to us - the reality is more like Sticks and stones may break my bones but your words will emotionally scar me forever.....that’s more the truth.

Because words can hurt.

Words can send your relationship off the cliff.

Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, other than Jesus, says this in Proverbs 12:18

Careless words stab like a sword.

Ouch. That’s a pretty intense analogy, to say that careless words could hurt and damage someone and inflict so much pain – like being stabbed with a sword.

What happens when someone is stabbed with a sword? The blade penetrates through the skin, tearing flesh, causing bleeding and leaves a gaping wound. A stabbing would inflict serious pain that you’d remember forever.

When I was in fifth grade I had a newly sharpened pencil in my hand and I was walking across the classroom back to my desk and my hand bumped the back of someone’s desk and – I don’t know how it happened – but the pencil went from being in my right hand to stabbing my left hand and sticking out of it – straight up. It hurt. I had to walk down to the nurse like this holding my hand trying not to knock the pencil I was terrified to pull it out of my hand. It hurt. I remember that moment. I still have a tiny black lead spot in the center of my left hand from that incident. I stabbed myself with a pencil...on accident.

A lot of times our words are carless accidents.

And Solomon felt completed to write this.....that careless words are brutal. Carless words can inflict serious and lasting pain....like a stabbing.

And when you’ve been hurt by something someone has said to you.....it’s like a stabbing for you.

It’s a moment in time that you’ll never forget.

I haven’t met one women yet who doesn’t have a story of being stabbed by someone’s words.

Most often it’s from their childhood or when they were a young girl and years later, as grown women, they can still remember verbatim what someone said to them – especially if it was about the way they looked.

You're ugly – your nose is big – you're fat – you're too skinny – you look like a boy. Women can be vicious.

And guy's you aren't exempt either – you can act like names don't hurt you but we know the truth. Yeah, you might walk up to a friend and say hey loser or have some silly nickname you use like moron or butthead.... but the truth is - guys are actually a little more fragile in this department than you think. Because at their core men need respect (that's just the way God wired them) and most often that comes in words of affirmation so you might act like "names don't hurt you" but you also have a story of careless words that left some scars.

Maybe it was on the little league field and your coach said something about your athletic ability or lack thereof and you remember that day being in front of all your friends.

Maybe it's something more recent, like you got passed up for a promotion and you're boss told you carelessly and quickly why. Ouch. Those words hurt, that was a stabbing for you.

My junior year in high school I took an honors chemistry class. It was hard and very challenging and for anyone who's taken chemistryit's the type of subject that builds – you learn this material and then the next day you learn the next step but if you missed the earlier step you're just lost – there is no way you can work the problem or balance the equation. So I had been sick for a few days and missed chemistry class. My teacher knew this but called me up to the chalkboard to balance this huge chemical equation. Oh my gosh, my face flushed, my hands starting sweating. I just stood there with my back to the class – I couldn't do it. My teacher said you are going to stand there until you finish the problem. So I told him, I can't I don't know how. He made me stand there at the front of the class and said , I bet if I looked up stupid in the dictionary there would be a picture of your face. Well now I started crying in front of the whole class....then the bell rang, thankfully it was over.

But that moment – those careless words that he spoke to me – holy cow, that hurt.

Words have power.

Mean comments whether it's from a spouse, friend or teacher – wound us.

But here's the good news.....there is more to this verse.

Here's Proverbs 12:18 – the whole verse

"Careless words stab like a sword, but wise words bring healing."

A little strange that the very things that wound us – words – are the very things that can heal us.

When you cut your hand, your body heals itself right, that's the way God made us and it's miraculous. That when our body gets a scrape or injury- we have systems programmed to go into action and begin healing the body.

But when we have stabs and wounds from careless words, our body can't heal those types of injuries. It would be nice. When we're hurt some chemical burst happens that makes us forget that we ever heard the comment and we continue on as normal. But it doesn't happen that way.

God uses words to heal us because He knows how powerful they are.

Words are a big deal to Him. Jesus is referred to as "the Word".

In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. John 1:1-5

Jesus is part of the trinity – God the Father, Jesus the son and the Holy Spirit. He has always existed.

Now as we communicate, words have the capacity to unveil thoughts, feelings, and emotions; to reveal the person behind the words. Jesus is referred to as "the word" because it's God's way of expressing Himself.

Jesus is God's word in the flesh.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" John 1:14

That's how God communicates with us, his love for us - it's how we learn about God's character.

Because that's what words do....one of the reasons they are so powerful is that words reveal true character.

In Matthew 12:36 – Jesus said – "Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation." Matthew 12:36

Jesus, who knows our very thoughts and intentions, says our words are the index of the heart. However idle they may seem, our words will be taken account of, whether good or bad, in estimating character in the day of judgment.

Words can stab; but God uses words to bring healing.

Now, God doesn't speak down from the heaven in a loud voice. Although that would be cool.

(big God voice) "Julie you are not stupid be healed from Mr. Zeranti's cruel words in chemistry class. Carry on my child."

God is a part of the healing process but he uses you and I as his mouthpiece.

Which is pretty awesome....and a big responsibility and privilege to be used by God in that way. That we can partner with Him and believe that when we speak wise and loving words to someone that God will infuse those words with power to heal.

Now we might not see the healing right away. It would be great if there was a formula where you could speak one sentence to them and it would be instantaneous healing for their soul.

But healing is a process. And we don't always like process.

We like instantaneous. We like things quick.

But it doesn't work that way.

If you've struggled with low self-esteem for your whole life from words your parents spoke to you as a kid – one nice "You can do it, you're awesome" comment isn't going to instantly heal the full extent of the damage done.

When we're wounded it takes more than one nice compliment or kind word to reverse the damage and begin the healing process.

Ever notice how you can receive 10 great compliments and only 1 criticism – but that's the one you focus on. Forget that every other comment was great right – we zone in on that one bad comment.

And there's a scientific reason for that – research shows that the brain gives more attention to negative experiences over positive ones, and here's why, because negative events pose a chance of danger. So by default, the brain alerts itself to potential threats in the environment and then awareness of the positive suddenly takes a lot more deliberate effort.

Basically we become hyper-focused on the negative and have a hard time seeing and feeling the positive. So we need to hear kind words a lot - day after day, situation after situation. And each time a little more healing takes place.

So back to our relationships, I don't think we want to intentionally stab those we care about and love the most.

But it happens. How do we stop saying the things we don't want to say and start saying the things that we do?

How can we learn to use our words to heal and not hurt?

Number one

1. We have to learn to be slow so we don't stab.

We've got to learn how to slow this thing down, especially when we're angry. Those are usually the times when we blurt something out and just as soon as it's out of our mouth, we regret it and think I can't believe I said that.

We've got to learn from those moments – we have to learn how to be slow.

In radio and television broadcasting they sometimes use the 7 second delay to prevent something offensive from going out over the airwaves – wouldn't it be great if we had a 7 second delay.

Whoo.....there would be a lot of hurtful things....not said. Which is good. But we don't have a 7 second delay, we can pretend we do.

Counselors say that there are certain times and occasions when it's harder for us to be slow.

It's called **H.A.L.T. = hungry, angry, lonely tired**

When we're hungry, angry, lonely and tired, it's during these times that it's hard for us to be slow – we have less self-control over our emotions. I mean this makes sense. Studies show that couples fight the most when they connect at the end of the day. No duh? Because they have a few of those things going on..... hungry, tired.

But here's a way we can reverse the power of HALT. Now this may sound a bit cliché – but it's not -- it actually works – , and we want things that will work right?

In these moments, when we're hungry, angry, lonely or tired – and you're on the cliff/edge of saying some words that might stab.....here's when we need to invite God into the process to help us with our words.

Maybe this sounds crazy to some of you – you're never done this before .

Don't pray out loud "God would you help me live with this jerk?" – not that, not that.

But we're talking about talking to God in your head – God, would you help me? Would you put a delay on this thing? Shut my mouth – help me to slow down.

Because in a moment of frustration, with just a few words, we can send our relationships over the cliff with Toonces.

And one small caveat – notice I said we have to be slow, not silent.

A lot of us, when we get mad, we're like – oh yeah – I can be slow with words. I can be slow for weeks.

Sometimes the most wounding words are the ones that are never said.

2. How do we heal with our words? We have to be alert to opportunities.

This one isn't damage control – this isn't about fixing the stabbing that just occurred. You've just said something cruel to your spouse and you quickly follow it up with...but I like your hair.

This is about being pro-active and alert in all your relationships with your spouse, best friend, co-worker.....the drive-thru guy.

How do I use my words to help heal someone?

It's simply about caring for people around you and being aware that we all have areas of woundedness.

And God can use you. God wants to use you. We are conduits.

It doesn't involve long counseling sessions or anything like that.

It's simply – being alert that we all have areas of woundedness so the words that we choose to speak – let them be wise, kind, encouraging and life-giving.

End with story or example.

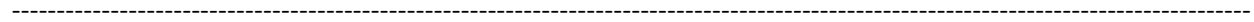


You matter

You're doing a good job

I love you

You can do it



When God reveals truth to us through scripture, through the written word, you have a choice.

You can remain stagnant and dry in your faith and relationship with Jesus or you can put into practice what you've learned, I say put into practice because we're not going to get it right all the time.

But trying is forward motion.

It's like wanting to be a better tennis player so you sit and listen to your coach read a book about how to become a better tennis player but you never actually take the court or swing your racket. You're not going to grow in your tennis skills if you simply read what it is you're supposed to do to get better but you never actually do it.