

505 Words

Our Words Reveal Our Character

by

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The topics a man favors in conversation reveal a wealth of information about his interests and goals. As he speaks with his wife his words demonstrate the value he places on her, and the dialogue gives listeners an indication of the health of the relationship. In discussions with his children the man reveals much about his methods of parenting. Verbal exchanges with friends and coworkers uncover additional aspects of his nature.

We get it. Through our words we display to the world what we're like on the inside. Our speech reveals our character.

King David understood the importance of his words and must have struggled as we do to speak rightly. He implored God for help in Psalm 141:3 (ESV), "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!" Picture our words passing through a quality control inspection with God evaluating their content before they become speech. Would that precaution reduce life's conflicts? A wise person wrote, "A lot of things are opened by mistake, but none so often as the mouth."

The most-used key on my keyboard is the backspace with its power to erase sentences

and correct typos. With printed work I can shape and reshape until I'm confident the words convey the intended message. But speech occurs in real time. Our thoughts become sound waves, easily detected by anyone in range of our voice. No facility exists for editing spoken words, and once uttered words cannot be unspoken. In choosing our words we should follow the carpenter's adage which warns us to "measure twice and cut once."

When our guard is down any of us can release a flurry of explosive words. We can verbally wound our listeners and inflict great pain. Guilt and shame cause us to wonder where that putrid speech originated. Jesus left a clue in Matthew 12:34 (ESV) where he told us, "...out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Speech originates in the heart. Our words are flavored by our thoughts. Perhaps the precaution we need even more than guarding our speaking is to guard our thinking.

What thoughts do I allow to free-range in the privacy of my mind? Paul highlighted the importance of a single thought in 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) where he urged us to "...take every thought captive..." Left to graze the solitary thought grows stronger becoming harder to remove. In a vicious cycle wrong thinking generates wrong thinking, and the herd corrupts the stream of our speech. The mind and the mouth are directly connected.

How do we guard against the predatory habits of wrong thinking and upgrade the quality of our words? We alter the output by adjusting our input. Filling our hearts with wholesome ideas (see Philippians 4:8) promotes healthy thinking, and positive thoughts lead to improvements in our speaking.

Do our words really matter? Words reveal character, and character determines destiny. The question to consider is, "What is my speech telling others about me?"

Author bio:

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