

“Toxic Words”

Series: Toxic

(Part 4 of 4)

Open: Which phrase describes you best: a) I think before I speak, or b) I speak before I think?

Explore: Read 1 Samuel 23:15-18; Psalm 57:1-11.

Saul was the first king of the Israelite nation. Unfortunately, he was not the kind of man God was looking for – God was looking for someone like David. Saul became jealous of David and looked for opportunities to kill him.

1. Why was David in hiding (1 Sam. 23:17)?
2. During this time David wrote a song about what was happening, how would you describe David emotionally speaking (Ps. 57:1-3)?
3. David was in danger physically, but in what other way was he being hurt by King Saul (Ps. 57:4-6)? Why would Saul and his men be interested in insulting David’s character?
4. How did David respond (Ps. 57:7-11)? Does this seem strange to you?

Reflect: Review key points from the lesson before answering the questions.

1. Read through the verses under “sticks and stones and words” from the lesson. What kinds of words are you hearing in your life currently?
2. Describe a time when you were encouraged and uplifted by the power of positive, life-giving words.
3. You may not be able to stop toxic words from being spoken to you, but how can you guard your heart against toxic words?
4. Read Ephesians 4:29. What makes this passage so challenging? Is there someone you need to start speaking more life-giving words to today?
5. Why is it important for us to speak life-giving words to ourselves and our circumstances? Is there a situation you are facing right now in which you need to stop speaking toxic words to yourself? How has this lesson helped?

Apply: Live it.

As a CARE Group: Probably at least one person in your life has been hearing toxic words from you. That person may be a family member, friend, co-worker, child, or teammate. Who is it and how will you commit to make contact with that person and speak life-giving words to them this week?

On your own: Commit to God that you will strive to use life-giving words in all of your relationships. Pray and ask God to help you remove toxic words from your thoughts and minds. Pray and ask God to guard your heart from toxic words that are being spoken against you.

Listening Guide Notes

Toxic: anything containing poisonous material capable of causing serious sickness or even death.

Sticks and stones and words...

“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” –Proverbs 18:21 (NIV p. 450)

“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” –Proverbs 12:18 (NIV p. 445)

“The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.” –Proverbs 15:4 (NIV p. 447)

Word to the wise...

1. Guard your heart against toxic words.

^[20] *“My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. ^[21] Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; ^[22] for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body. ^[23] Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” –Proverbs 4:20-23 (NIV p. 440)*

2. Speak life-giving words to others every chance you get.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” –Ephesians 4:29 (NIV p. 816)

3. Speak life-giving words to yourself and to your circumstances.

“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.” –Mark 11:23 (NIV p. 708)

^[34] *“You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ^[35] A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ^[36] But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ^[37] For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” –Matthew 12:34-37 (NIV p. 683)*