CHANGE
YOUR WORDS,
CHANGE
YOUR LIFE

UNDERSTANDING THE POWER
OF EVERY WORD YOU SPEAK

JOYCE MEYER
Words can poison, words can heal.
Words start and fight wars, but words make peace.
Words lead men to the pinnacles of good
And words can plunge men to the depths of evil.
—Marguerite Schumann
Most of us don’t realize how powerful words are and how huge an impact they have on our lives. Think about it. Even two simple syllables—Da-da—are powerful enough to make a grown man cry when uttered for the first time by his baby.

I believe that words contain tremendous power: it can be either positive, constructive power or negative, destructive power.

In Genesis, we read that God used words to create the world we live in. The Bible says in Proverbs 18:21 that the power of life and death are in the tongue. That is an amazing statement and one that we should seriously consider. Each time we speak words, we are speaking either life or death to those who hear us and to ourselves. So we need to be cautious about the words we utter.

Our mouth gives expression to what we want, think, and feel; therefore, it reveals a great deal about the one who is speaking. We can learn a lot about ourselves just by listening to the things that we say. Matthew 12:34–35 says that “out of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man from his inner good treasure flings forth good things, and the evil
man out of his inner evil storehouse flings forth evil things.” Our words are the result of our inner thoughts and attitudes. One might say that our words are a movie screen that reveals what we have been thinking and the attitudes that we have.

I believe that our words can increase or decrease our level of joy. They can affect the answers to our prayers, and have a positive or negative effect on our future. We should pay a lot of attention to what the Word of God has to teach us about the power of our words. When a person isn't satisfied with the condition of her life, it would be wise to take an inventory of the words she has spoken.

God has a good plan for each one of us, but it won’t automatically happen without our cooperation. We are partners with God in this life, and He wants us to be in agreement with what He has spoken about us in His Word. As you read this book, I believe you will gain new insight into the fact that as you change your words, you can change your life.
Therese was a fabulous worker, friend, and colleague. Everyone in her office loved her—from her bosses to the cleaning lady. She always had a kind word for everyone. One of her best assets was her amazing ability to help people feel good about themselves. She could make someone whose feelings had been hurt feel like they were the best thing since sliced bread. She could make an insecure colleague feel like a genius. Her sense of humor always lifted others’ moods and made them laugh even if they were annoyed or unhappy. Not only that, but she was smart—very smart. In her five years on the job, she had received three promotions, and her employer had recently told her that she was on a fast track toward a management position. If things continued the way they were going, she could even expect a vice-presidency within just a few years.

One evening while working late on a project, she discovered that her boss had made a bad judgment call in a speech that he had written and asked her to edit. He had included a
foolish joke that some could find offensive. Therese picked up the phone to leave him a voice mail and tell him her thoughts. “What were you thinking, boss?” she said. “Don’t you know the CEO will hate that joke? And he has no sense of humor.”

Unfortunately, instead of sending the voice mail to her boss, Therese inadvertently pressed a button that sent the voice mail to everyone in the company. The next morning, chaos ensued. While Therese wasn’t fired, she didn’t get that next promotion—or the one after. The push of a button had sealed her future at the company.

That’s an extreme incident, but there are many others today that have far greater consequences. Children no longer tease one another; they bully each other, and bullying isn’t an exception among students—it’s the norm. It doesn’t just happen at school or play; it happens on the Internet, too. In fact, a new word has entered our vocabulary: cyberbullying. Facebook is now sometimes used as a weapon.

Never in the history of the world have words been so cheap, quick, irrevocable, and viral. Through cell phones and the Internet, we now have texting, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In addition, we have radio, television, and printed media. Words are flying around in the atmosphere like never before. As of June 2010, 77.2 percent of all Americans use the Internet (267 million people). One quarter of the world’s population is online. Forty-one percent of all Americans actively maintain a profile page on Facebook, which generates one billion pieces of content every single day. U.S. awareness of Twitter has exploded from 5 percent in 2008 to 87 percent in 2010, and by now the figures are even greater. In 2010, more than 17 million Americans used
Twitter and the average number of “tweets” per day in the United States alone was 15.5 million.

Obviously, there are good uses of all these forms of communication; however, there are many disturbing consequences, including online bullying that has led to teenage suicide, identity theft, child safety risk, pornography addiction, and ruined careers. Job applicants lose out because of Facebook accounts of bad behavior; workers send ill-advised e-mails before thinking.

People have destroyed relationships by typing their most secret thoughts in e-mail and then pressing Send before realizing how revealing the message was. Owing to the information available today, personal privacy has all but vanished. Sadly, anyone can say anything about an individual—whether it is true or not—and it is out there floating around in cyberspace just waiting for someone to access the information. People’s reputations have been destroyed by what others have said and yet their words held no truth at all. You might say that we have a “word explosion” going on, and we have yet to see what damage will be caused by it unless people learn the power of words and make a commitment to use them in a godly way.

**We Eat Our Words…**

I am sure you have heard someone say, “You are going to eat those words.” It may sound like a mere statement to us, but in reality we do eat our words. What we say not only affects others, but also affects us.
Words are wonderful when used in a proper way. They can encourage, edify, and give confidence to the hearer. A right word spoken at the right time can actually be life changing.

A man has joy in making an apt answer, and a word spoken at the right moment—how good it is!  

*Proverbs 15:23*

We can literally increase our own joy by speaking right words. We can also upset ourselves by talking unnecessarily about our problems or things that have hurt us in relationships. Not too long ago I had a disappointing situation take place with someone I considered to be a close friend and I noticed that each time I talked about it, I would have a difficult time getting it off my mind for the remainder of the day. I finally realized that if I wanted to get over it, I was going to have to stop mentally and verbally going over it again and again. People kept asking me about the situation out of genuine concern, but I ultimately realized that I had to answer, “It is better for me if I just don’t talk about it.”

The words that come out of our mouths go into our own ears as well as other people’s, and then they drop down into our soul, where they give us either joy or sadness, peace or upset, depending on the types of words we have spoken. Our words can even oppress our spirit. God desires that our spirit be light and free so it can function properly, not heavy and oppressed.

When we understand the power of words and realize that we can choose what we think and speak, our lives can be transformed. Our words are not forced on us; they formulate
in our thoughts and then we speak them. We can learn to choose our thoughts, to resist wrong ones and think on good, healthy, and right ones. Where the mind goes, the man follows. We could also say, where the mind goes, the mouth follows!

You don't even have to be talking to someone to increase your joy with your words. The mere confession of good things is enough to cheer you up. I have written a great deal about the power of confessing God's Word out loud, and I will continue to do so because it has been one of the most helpful things I have done in my life.

When you get up in the morning, if there is something you need to attend to that day that you're not looking forward to, you can say, “I dread this day,” or you can say, “God will give me strength today to do whatever I need to do and to do it with joy.” Which of these two statements do you think would better prepare you for the day?

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,” says Proverbs 15:4 (NKJV). According to scripture, God has given His children a new nature, and we are taught to daily renew our mind and attitude. Having a positive outlook on life and speaking positive words are two of the most wholesome things we can do.

From the fruit of his words a man shall be satisfied with good. *Proverbs 12:14a*

A good man eats good from the fruit of his mouth. *Proverbs 13:2a*

A man's [moral] self shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth; and with the consequence of his words he must be satisfied [whether good or evil]. *Proverbs 18:20*
So Choose Your Food Carefully

Anyone who wants to be healthy is careful to choose quality food that will provide good nutrition. If we want to be healthy in our soul and spirit, we should also choose to take in words that will build us up and increase our peace and joy. As we have seen, we eat our words, and we can rightfully say that they are food for our souls.

The world is filled with bad news. Turn on any news station or buy any newspaper or news magazine and you will find it filled with reports of murder, theft, wars, famine, and all kinds of horribly tragic events. And although these things are prevalent in the world today, I do wish with all my heart that we had some “Good News” stations and newspapers. I believe there are many good things happening in the world and probably there is more good than bad, but the evil is magnified in a way that often seems overwhelming. Although we may want to know what is going on in the world, we should not have a steady diet of “bad news,” but we should choose to read, watch, and talk about good things.

Fortunately, we don’t have to wait for someone else to cheer us up! We can do it with our own words by what we choose to talk about. I recently walked into a room and heard a group of people talking about several businesses that had recently filed for bankruptcy. Then they mentioned two others that they had heard were going to file for bankruptcy. I felt a gloom hanging in the atmosphere so I said, “Well, God is not bankrupt and He is on our side.” Immediately the atmosphere changed and everyone agreed with me.
I am not suggesting at all that we deny reality, but we can choose what we want to talk about. If we are not helping ourselves or anyone else by rehearsing all the bad things going on in the world, then why fill our conversation with it? I realize we are going to talk about conditions in the world to a certain degree. We want to be well informed of what is going on. There is no wisdom in being ignorant and taken by surprise, but to talk about it excessively or with no purpose merely creates a gloomy atmosphere that nobody will enjoy.

**Thinking About What You Talk About**

We talk a lot and quite often pay no attention to what we are saying, let alone think seriously about the impact of our words. I want to encourage you to take some time and think about the types of things you usually talk about. What kind of conversation do you enjoy and participate in? If we are honest with ourselves, we may find that some of our bad moods are directly linked to our conversation. Even some of our problems can be linked to bad choices we make about what we say. As we progress in this book, you will learn that words have so much power that they can actually create circumstances in our lives. For example, if a man continually says, “I can’t control my appetite,” he’ll believe he can’t, and therefore he won’t control it. If a woman says, “I will never have any money or own nice things,” she may end up living far below the level that God desires for her simply because she won’t even try to do better. We believe more of what we say than we believe what anyone else says to us. This is very
important, so I want to repeat it: You believe what you say more than you believe what others say to you. Think about it. When someone compliments you when you're wearing a dress that you don't particularly like and you're having a bad hair day, do you believe her? Or do you believe that little voice inside that says, “She’s just being nice, because you don’t look good; you look terrible.”

If we say a thing often enough, silently in our hearts or verbally, we will believe it whether or not it’s true. And the Bible teaches us that we receive what we believe. All of God’s promises are received through believing them. Actually, believe means “to receive,” and receive means “to believe.” Believing and receiving are like conjoined twins. The two cannot be separated. What we believe becomes our reality!

It would be a wise exercise to take a little time at the end of each day and think about what we talked about that day. Certainly anytime we are feeling a bit gloomy, we should ask ourselves immediately, “What have I been talking about?” Our words don’t cause all of our problems, but they do cause a great deal of them and they should be given a good deal of consideration when we are looking for answers to the problems we encounter in life. We all have challenges in life, but we can make them better or worse by the way we talk about them.

What kind of conversation do you have around the lunch table at work? While riding to work in the car pool? Chatting with friends at a social gathering? Why not decide each day before you even go out of the house that you are only going to talk about things that benefit you and everyone who hears you? Since we have the power to make our day better, we would be foolish indeed if we didn’t do it.
Let me clearly say that I don’t believe we can change all of our circumstances into pleasant ones by making positive confessions, but I do believe many of them will change according to God’s will. I only want to teach you to be in agreement with God and learn to say what He says. For example, God would never say, “This bad circumstance is too much for me; it is just too hard and I am going to give up.” You might be thinking right now, “Well, of course God wouldn’t say that!” So then why do you? God is in control, not us; however, we can cooperate with His will or hinder it by agreeing or disagreeing with His Word. One thing is for sure: Speaking negatively could hurt you, but speaking positively never will, so why not go with the positive and see what kind of results you get?

Seedtime and Harvest

In the Bible we learn the principle of sowing and reaping. Beginning in Genesis, God teaches us that as long as the earth remains, there will be seedtime and harvest. We can readily understand how a farmer sows seed and waits for his harvest, but we need more understanding about what I will refer to as “spiritual seed.” We can see a tomato seed with our eyes and understand the process of planting and expecting a harvest of tomatoes. We cannot see attitudes, thoughts, or words, but they are also seeds that operate in the spiritual (unseen) realm and they also produce a harvest based on what was planted.

If a person continually sows negative thoughts, attitudes, and words, he will produce many negative results in his life.
Likewise, if he sows positive, life-filled thoughts, attitudes, and words, he will see good, positive results. Jesus said that His words were spirit and life (see John 6:63).

As I have already said, our words affect us as well as the hearer. They touch our soul and spirit and can produce a harvest in our physical body. For example, if someone said something very hateful and mean to me, it would affect my emotions and mind, which could in turn cause sadness to appear on my countenance. Likewise, if someone says something uplifting and encouraging to me, it affects my mind and emotions in a positive way, putting a smile on my face, and often I can feel a flow of extra energy coursing through my body. We are energized by positive words and weakened by negative ones. Words can make us angry or they can calm us down; therefore, they must have power.

A speaker was talking about the power of positive thinking and the power of words.

One of the audience members raised his hand and said, “It’s not saying ‘good fortune, good fortune, good fortune’ that will make me feel better. Nor will saying ‘bad luck, bad luck, bad luck’ make me feel worse. They’re only words and by themselves have no power.”

The speaker replied, “Shut up, you fool, you don’t understand a thing about this.” The audience member was stunned. His face became red, and he was tempted to reply, “You @&&#!!&@!” [something I can’t say in this book].

The speaker raised his hand. “Please excuse me. I didn’t mean to upset you. Please accept my most sincere apologies.” The member of the audience calmed down. Some people in the hall murmured; others shuffled their feet.
The speaker resumed. “There’s the reply to the question you asked me. A few words made you very angry. The other words calmed you down. Now do you understand the power of words?”

I would like you to seriously consider the following scriptures, for they also show us the power of words:

For as the rain and snow come down from the heavens, and return not there again, but water the earth and make it bring forth and sprout, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater.

So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.  *Isaiah 55:10–11*

In God’s Word we are taught a very important principle: The same as natural seed produces a harvest, so does God’s Word. When He speaks it, or we speak it as His children, we will see a result based on the type of seed we have sown. Very simply put, if I talk about lack, sickness, things I am angry about, and problems most of the time, then the “word seeds” I am sowing will actually produce a harvest of more of the same. On the other hand, if I choose to talk about provision, health, forgiveness, God’s goodness, and faithfulness, I am sowing seeds that will produce a good harvest according to the seed I am sowing with my words.

A farmer doesn’t plant a tomato seed and expect to get broccoli, and we should not plant word seeds of bad things
hoping to get a good harvest. Once we truly understand this principle and act accordingly, we can change our words and therefore we can change our lives.

I want to close this chapter with a story that I will never forget, told by a friend of mine.

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, “Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd.”

I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friend on Saturday afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran into him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, “Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.” He looked at me and said, “Hey, thanks!” There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude.

I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to a private
school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before.

We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes. We hung out all weekend, and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends thought the same of him.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn’t me having to get up there and speak.

On graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. As he started, he cleared his throat, and began, "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach… but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story."

I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his mom wouldn’t have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. “Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable.” I heard the gasp go through the crowd as
this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth.

Never underestimate the power of your words and deeds. With a few kind words, you can change a person’s life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each other’s lives to impact one another in some way.