

# Word can heal and word can harm

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Words can Heal and Words can Harm Words are very important. Words can heal and words can harm. Words can hurt grievously and for a long time. The tongue can bless and the tongue can curse. It is very important for us to control our words and tame our tongue when we are angry. Many times, when we are angry we say the most atrocious things. We forget ourselves and become indifferent to what we say. We blast the other person without mercy, although we may not mean those words. But words once spoken cannot be taken back and it takes a long time to forgive and forget. We have to exercise self-control. Many couples are particularly prone to such outbursts when they get mad. But it is not an easy thing to control our tongue when we are provoked, boiled over with anger or have outburst of wrath. It is at such time that we have to learn to hold our tongue and to remain silent. If we can't tame our tongue, we have to take a break or go for a walk to cool off. It is much easier to control the words before the blow-up than during the explosion. Uncontrollable words spoken in anger can have devastating effect. Angry words, that are used unthinkingly, such as " I don't care," " I can't be bothered," " I don't need you," or " you can go to hell" cause pain and feelings of rejection. They give rise to insecurity. The unmeant and foolish words contain full of deadly poison and can play havoc in the mind. The unruly words get churned over for hours on end and create their worst mischief in a difficult relationship. It can take a very long time to forgive what was said. Let us learn to turn away from angry words before they leave our mouth and try to say healing words instead. Father Henri Nouwen said, " It is so important to choose our words wisely. When we are boiling with anger and eager to throw bitter words at our opponents, it is

better to remain silent. Words spoken in rage will make reconciliation very hard. Choosing life and not death, blessings and not curses, often starts by choosing to remain silent or choosing carefully the words that open the way to healing." (" Bread for the Journey," Sept 5) We must also be very careful that in our anger we do not label our children with ugly names such as fat, stupid, snake, pig, moron, ' kay-poh'(busy-body), useless, good for nothing. Such negative words can do harm to them for years to come! Henri Nouwen said, " When we say to someone, ' You are an ugly, useless, despicable person,' we might have ruined the possibility for a relationship with that person for life. Words can continue to do harm for many years." (" Bread for the Journey," Sept 5) Indeed, we do not want to spoil our relationship with our own precious children. We must always use words to build them up not words to knock them down. Be an encourager not a critic. They have enough people criticizing them but far too few approving and affirming them. So to help our children to fulfill their highest potential we should be their greatest ENCOURAGER. Encourage. Encourage. Encourage on every occasion. St Paul advises us not to speak harmful words but to use helpful words, " Do not use harmful words, but 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." (Ephesians 4: 29 TEV) Also, don't utter vulgar or obscene words, " Nor is it fitting for you to use language which is obscene, profane, or vulgar." (Ephesians 5: 4 TEV) And no more immoral talks, jokes or gossips " Since you are God's people, it is not right that any matters of sexual immorality or indecency or greed should even be mentioned among you... You may be sure that no one who is immoral, indecent, or greedy (for greed is a form of

idolatry) will ever receive a share in the Kingdom of Christ and of God."(Ephesians 5: 3, 5 TEV) St Paul warns us not to quarrel so we are to "Remind our people of this, and give them a solemn warning in God's presence not to fight with words. It does no good, but only ruins the people who listen... Keep away from profane and foolish discussions, which only drive people further away from God. Such teaching is like an open sore that eats away the flesh."(2 Timothy 2: 14, 16-17 TEV) He reiterates that we should " keep away from foolish and ignorant arguments; you know that they end up in quarrels. As the Lord's servant, you must not quarrel. You must be kind toward all, a good and patient teacher, who is gentle as you correct your opponents, for it may be that God will give them the opportunity to repent and come to know the truth. And then they will come to their senses and escape the trap of the Devil, who had caught them and made them obey his will."(2 Timothy 2: 22-26 TEV) It is vitally important that we exercise our choice to speak helpful words wherever we are, particularly at home. As Henri Nouwen said, " Words can bring consolation, comfort, encouragement, and hope. Words can take away fear, isolation, shame, and guilt. Words can reconcile, unite, forgive, and heal. Words can bring peace and joy, inner freedom and deep gratitude. Words, in short, can carry love on their wings. A word of love can be one of the greatest acts of love." (" Bread for the Journey," June 22) When we choose to speak words of care, words of encouragement, words of praise, words of love, words of admiration, positive words---they uplift and give meaning to our lives. Everyday we need to give and receive words of encouragement, hope and joy. We then create an environment that is pleasant to be in and that gives us the confidence and

courage to cope with our stressful life here and now. Henri Nouwen said, " When we say to our parents, children, or friends, ' I love you very much' or ' I care for you' or ' I think of you often' or ' You are my great gift,' we choose to give life. " It is not always easy to express our love directly in words. But whenever we do, we discover we have offered a blessing that will be long remembered. When a son can say to his father, ' Dad, I love you,' and when a mother can say to her daughter, ' Child, I love you,' a whole new blessed place can be opened up, a space where it is good to dwell. Indeed, words have the power to create life." (" Bread for the Journey," Sept 6) Often, we want to hear words such as, "'I've been thinking of you today,' or ' I missed you,' or ' I wish you were here,' or ' I really love you.' It is not always easy to say these words, but such words can deepen our bonds with one another. " Telling someone ' I love you' in whatever way is always delivering good news. Nobody will respond by saying, ' Well, I know that already, you don't have to say it again!' Words of love and affirmation are like bread. We need them each day, over and over. They keep us alive inside." (" Bread for the Journey," Feb 12) " When we say, ' I love you,' and say it from the heart, we can give another person new life, new hope, new courage. When we say, ' I hate you,' we can destroy another person. Let's watch our words." (" Bread for the Journey," Feb 11) At the same time, we must be careful that we are sincere in our words because if we say, ' I love you,' without meaning it, then such words do more harm than good. But if these same words are spoken from the heart, they create new life. They give joy. They bring happiness. We have to make sure that our words are rooted from our heart. To dwell in peace and joy, we have to learn from Jesus. As Henri Nouwen said, " The

words of Jesus can keep us erect and confident in the midst of the turmoil of the end-time. They can support us, encourage us, and give us life even when everything around us speaks of death. Jesus' words are food for eternal life. They do much more than give us ideas and inspiration. They lead us into the eternal life while we are still being clothed in mortal flesh. " When we keep close to the word of Jesus, reflecting on it, ' chewing' on it, eating it as food for the soul, we will enter even more deeply into the everlasting love of God." (" Bread for the Journey," Sept 20) So it is vitally essential for us to read the Bible, as, " Spiritual reading is food for our souls. As we slowly let the words of the Bible or a good spiritual book enter into our minds and descend into our hearts, we become different people. The Word gradually becomes flesh in us and transforms our whole being. Thus spiritual reading is a continuing incarnation of the divine Word within us. In and through Jesus, the Christ, God became flesh long ago. In and through our reading of God's Word and our reflection on it, God becomes flesh in us now and makes us into living Christs for today. " Let's keep reading God's Word with love and great reverence." (" Bread for the Journey," April 16) Since love is proved by works and not words alone, " What we live is more important than what we say, because the right way of living always leads to the right way of speaking. When we forgive our neighbours from our hearts, our hearts will speak forgiving words. When we are grateful, we will speak grateful words, and when we are hopeful and joyful, we will speak hopeful and joyful words. " When our words come too soon and we are not yet living what we are saying, we easily give double messages. Giving double messages--one with our words and another with our actions--makes us hypocrites. May our lives

give us the right words, and may our words lead us to the right lives." ("Bread for the Journey," June 20) Should we, then, keep quiet and not speak at all if we cannot live by what we say? No, said Henri Nouwen, " Can we only speak when we are fully living what we are saying? If all our words had to cover all our actions, we would be doomed to permanent silence! Sometimes we are called to proclaim God's love even when we are not yet fully able to live it. Does that mean we are hypocrites? Only when our own words no longer call us to conversion. Nobody completely lives up to his or her own ideals and visions. But by proclaiming our ideals and visions with conviction and great humility, we may gradually grow into the truth we speak. As long as we know that our lives always speak louder than our words, we can trust that our words will remain humble. (" Bread for the Journey," June 21) Finally, we need to remind ourselves that all of us have a responsibility to share and pass on our unique experiences in life to our children and others by telling our stories, verbally or if possible, in writing. Henri Nouwen said " One of the arguments we often use for not writing is this: ' I have nothing original to say. Whatever I might say someone else has already said it, and better than I will ever be able to.' This, however, is not a good argument for not writing. Each human being is unique and original, and nobody has lived what we have lived. Furthermore, what we have lived, we have lived not just for ourselves but for others as well. Writing can be a creative and invigorating way to make our lives available to ourselves and to others. " We have to trust that our stories deserve to be told. We may discover that the better we tell our stories the better we will want to live them." (" Bread for the Journey," April 29) Writing also helps us to touch base and clarify our

thoughts for us to live our life more fully. " Writing can help us to concentrate, to get in touch with the deepest stirrings of our hearts, to clarify our minds, to process confusing emotions, to reflect on our experiences, to give artistic \_expression to what we are living, and to store significant events in our memories. Writing can also be good for others who might read what we write. " Quite often a difficult, painful, or frustrating day can be ' redeemed' by writing about it. By writing we can claim what we have lived and thus integrate it more fully into our journeys. Then writing can become lifesaving for us and sometimes for others too." (" Bread for the Journey," April 27)