

# The Voice

## Communicating Life or Death

She opened the front door to meet endless chores and responsibilities. Dinner waited to be prepared, dishes waited to be washed, and laundry waited its turn to be folded. “What have you been doing all day?” she interrogated. Before he could answer, she walked away, her words and body language expressing her irritation and disappointment in him. She had just kindled a fire that would soon be raging between them.

Few individuals have greater influence in a man’s life than his wife. The way she communicates with him, to him, and about him, will build him up or tear him down, encourage him or exasperate him. The words she speaks into his life will bring vitality to the relationship or will destroy it altogether.

Eve’s words influenced Adam’s decision to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:17). Abraham heeded the voice of his wife Sarai, bringing distressing consequences to their relationship (Genesis 16:2). Solomon’s wives turned his heart away from the true and living God to serve their gods (1 Kings 11:4).

Do you believe you are responsible for influencing your husband’s outlook on life, his decisions, and his beliefs? Do you believe your words can change your relationship for good or bad, now, and in the future? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

In one word, describe the message you believe you are currently speaking into your husband’s life. \_\_\_\_\_

How are you communicating this message to him? \_\_\_\_\_

*“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18, NIV).*

### **Life or Death?**

Proverbs 18:21 tells us that *“death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit”* (NKJV).

With the ability to speak comes the ability to influence others, namely our husbands, negatively or positively. Reflect on your interaction with your husband over the past couple of weeks. What words have you spoken with the intent to bring life (revitalization, refreshing, growth, etc.) to him *and* your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

Consider this: Have you taken the time to encourage your husband and to express your belief in his abilities and decisions? Have you thanked him for providing for you? If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_

Read James 3:2-4.

What purposes do the bit and rudder serve? \_\_\_\_\_

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Both a bit and a rudder have the power to direct. Similarly, contained in our words is the power to direct our husband's life, and the power to direct the course of our relationship with him. As stated in Proverbs 18:21, the words we speak into our husband's life will not only affect his person but will directly determine the "fruit" that results in the relationship.

What "fruit" are you partaking of as a result of your interaction with your husband? \_\_\_\_\_

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Verse 4 of James 3 concludes with the words "*wherever the pilot desires*" (NKJV). At the present time, what are you doing to ensure your relationship successfully maintains its course and reaches its destination? \_\_\_\_\_

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In contrast to the life-giving words, we *should* be speaking are the words that bring "death" to the man and to the relationship. Turn to Judges 16:4-22.

Verse 16 tells us that "[*Delilah*] *pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death*" (NKJV). The New International Version states that Delilah "*nagged*" and "*prodded him day after day.*" It is easy to condemn Delilah's dealings with Samson without examining the words that come out of our mouths.

To "nag" your husband is to "find fault incessantly, complain, to be a persistent source or annoyance and distraction, and to irritate by constant scolding or urging." Similarly, to "vex" another is to "bring trouble, distress, or agitation to, to irritate or annoy by petty provocations."<sup>1</sup>

While your intentions may not be the same as Delilah's, overtime, nagging words will produce similar results. What happened to the man, Samson, and to the relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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How will complaining, pushing, and bringing up petty issues consequently affect your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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With this in mind, consider the following verses: Proverbs 21:9, 19.

It is interesting to note that the opposite of "nagging" is to "commend, compliment, praise, acclaim, applaud, and hail."<sup>2</sup> How do you oppress your husband and your relationship by *not* speaking praise and thanks into his life? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jezebel, wife to King Ahab, was a woman known for her religious zeal and her ability to strike fear into the hearts of God's most valiant prophets. She is less noted for her influence over her husband. Read 1 Kings 21:25.

Jezebel had a strong, domineering character, was obstinate and forceful. She was indeed the power behind the throne, corrupting her husband and the nation of Israel. She undermined her husband's authority, giving him a reputation of weakness. Jezebel belittled, controlled, and manipulated to get what she wanted.

In what areas of your marriage have you demonstrated characteristics like those of Jezebel? How will these traits bring “death” to your husband and to your relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

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A final word on the contentious wife: You may not consider yourself a contentious wife, but by definition any woman who is inclined to exhibit assertiveness, hostility, and combativeness towards her husband *is* contentious! A contentious wife is also a defensive wife.

How often do you challenge your husband’s judgment—his decisions and opinions? Do you challenge his abilities and his authority? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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Proverbs 26:21 says, “*As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife*” (NIV).

### **Devastated**

Continue reading in James 3, beginning in verse 5 and ending in verse 6.

In these two verses the tongue is likened to a fire. Begin by describing the nature of fire. What characteristics do fire and the tongue share? \_\_\_\_\_

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How do “fires” generally begin between you and your spouse? \_\_\_\_\_

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A spark can represent a sarcastic word, a belittling comment, an opposing opinion, or a remark tainted with disrespect. According to verse 6, what can one harsh, or thoughtless word set on fire? \_\_\_\_\_

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If a fire is lit in a susceptible environment it will spread rapidly, all the while growing in intensity. What preventative measures can be taken to keep the sparks from becoming fires? \_\_\_\_\_

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Fire will continue to bring devastation until it is stopped. When a fire is raging between you and your spouse, what is required to extinguish the flames? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Ephesians 4:29-32.

Turn back to James 3 and read verses 7-18.

If the words that come out of your mouth are contrary to what you proclaim to believe, what sort of influence will you have on your husband? \_\_\_\_\_

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With this in mind, read James 1:19-20, 26. What do these verses speak into your life? \_\_\_\_\_

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James 3:8 stated that “*no man can tame the tongue,*” just as no *man* can tame the sin nature, but a wife who is yielded to God’s Spirit will speak words that are “*pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17, NKJV).

In closing, Psalm 19:14 says, “*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord my strength and my redeemer*” (NKJV).

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What similarities do you see between Matthew 12:33-37 and James 3:9-12?
2. The following virtues create communication in the marriage relationship:
  - Honesty (Proverbs 26:28, Ephesians 4:25)
  - Trust (Proverbs 17:9, 31:11)
  - Patience (1 Corinthians 13:4, Proverbs 14:29, 16:32)
  - Complete acceptance (Romans 15:7)
  - Forgiveness (Colossians 3:13)
  - Humility (Colossians 3:12)
  - Words spoken in love (1 Peter 3:8)

After you have read each verse, identify each area(s) of your communication that needs improvement. What role have *you* played in destroying communication? What can *you* do to bring healing to this area(s) of your marriage?

3. When communicating with your husband, is it beneficial to speak every thought? How does this show a lack of maturity (James 3:2) and a lack of self-control? Read James 1:19, Ecclesiastes 3:7, and Proverbs 17:27.
4. What does yelling accomplish when you are angry? Has your wrath ever accomplished the desired outcome?
5. Read Proverbs 15:1 and James 1:20. What is *not* produced through harsh words? According to Ephesians 4:26-27, what can happen as a result of your wrath?
6. Warren Wiersbe believes that “time does not cover the sins of the tongue.” Consider the validity of his statement. Do you agree? Why or why not?
7. Contrast Proverbs 16:27 and 10:12. What is the result of “digging up” past grievances? Record Proverbs 10:12.
8. Proverbs 15:4 says, “*The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit*” (NIV). By definition, sarcasm is a sharp utterance used to cut or give pain. How does a sarcastic word spoken at the wrong time shut-down, or destroy communication? How do sarcastic words communicate disrespect and insensibility?
9. Review Ephesians 4:29-32. How are you to impart words of grace to your husband? What areas of your speech have you identified that do not impart grace?

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. Springfield, Mass. : Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1988). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus*. Previously published as: Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster.

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