

Speak Life

Preview

You may have heard the hype about a study conducted at the University of Maryland indicating that women speak three times as much as men. It has appeared all over the internet, talk shows, science mags, and journals for years. The phenomenon has been cited hundreds of times: women speak an average twenty thousand words a day, while men speak only seven thousand words a day. The U of M researchers concluded this after they assembled a group of ten kids ages 3–5 and tested them for levels of Foxp2, the protein in the brain that's key to language. They found that the girls had 30 percent more Foxp2 than the boys did. However, many professionals have complained that the scope of this study was way too narrow and should be taken with a grain of salt. On the other hand, many real-world studies of gender differences in language usage indicate that men and women are equally talkative. One recent study tested six samples of university students and found that both men and women speak about sixteen thousand words a day. But who's counting?

Praise

Which study do you think is correct? Can you guess how many words you average per day? Can you remember every conversation you had today? Has anyone ever told you that you talk too much? (Allow for discussion)

Parable

Words spill out of us so easily. It's like a person scooping up a large handful of dry sand. What happens? Some of it spills out, and there's no way the person can retrieve those same grains of sand. The same thing can happen with our words. We speak volumes every day, and if we are not careful some will cause harm to someone. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). Words can be a matter of life and death. As mentioned above, we speak an average of sixteen thousand words

per day. Upon reflection, what percentage of the words you spoke, say yesterday, were conducive to life? By that, did they help to edify or build up someone else? Were your words encouraging or strengthening? Such conversation is approved by God. He loves it when you speak life to someone. It not only blesses the person you are speaking to, but it blesses you as well.

On the other hand, some words bring death—both to the one speaking the words and the one hearing the words. This includes useless, unprofitable conversation that does not edify but that brings people down. It's a sinful waste of time. In the context of Matthew 12, the word "idle" in verse 36 means words that are injurious, false, or even malicious. In effect, Jesus was saying, "People who love to talk, whether in a good or in a bad way, will eventually be paid back; they will enjoy the advantages or disadvantages arising from their words." (See also Proverbs 18:21.) Use the tongue for good, not evil, because eventually you will have to eat your words!

Present

It takes four words—or maybe less—to bring death. Maybe you know how it feels to be on the receiving end of words that bring "death." Perhaps while growing up, your parents spoke words that put you down or discouraged or even disparaged you (made you feel worthless). Or maybe someone ruined your whole day today by saying something derogatory. It has been said that it may take four or five positive affirmations to undo one negative affirmation. Yes, only a few words can make or break you.

Practice

Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:36–37 should cause us to think soberly. One of the consequences of our words is that they will reveal who we really are and what is in our heart. Our words are powerful, and we need to take them seriously.

An example of how powerful words are is found in the Creation account in Genesis. In Genesis 1, God used the power of the spoken word to create the universe. Then

in Genesis 3, the serpent spoke to the woman, causing her to sin and to eat from the forbidden tree. This short conversation between the serpent and the woman was so powerful it changed mankind forever.

In addition, it is interesting to note that the serpent's words were not true, yet they had a far-reaching outcome that eventually brought forth death to every man. This shows us that no matter if words are true or false, once we believe them, they can become reality.

Another example of how important words are is found in John 1:1-5 (NKJV): "In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

This is amazing! In Genesis, God spoke a word to create the universe, and now, in his Gospel, John introduces Jesus as the Word.

Your words mean more than you know. Speak life today!

Pray

Have you ever had a friend who loved to hear you talk? If the answer is no, let me tell you that you do have such a friend. Song of Solomon 2:14 (NKJV) says, "Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet." God is your friend, and He loves to hear you talk to Him. Let's do it right now.

Lord, I pray that we will realize the power and weight of each word we speak. Let every word that proceeds from our mouth bring life to others. I pray that our words will reflect who You are.

Plus

Try counting all the words you speak in one day and tag us on social media with the answer. There's a reason God gave us two ears and one mouth. "Listen well so that you can speak with purpose." - Joshua Carson