



SUNDAY, MARCH 16

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths,
but only what is useful for building up,
as there is need, so that your words
may give grace to those who hear.

—Ephesians 4:29

What we say matters. Indeed, it matters a great deal. The childhood adage about sticks and stones—“but words will never hurt me”—is courageous but often untrue. After all, words can and do hurt. Our words can steal a person’s joy and murder their spirit, destroy their reputation and lead them to resentment or envy. In the same way, words can and do make us feel valued. “I love you.” “I forgive you.” “I am so very proud of you.” These are building blocks for helping construct a healthy and happy life.

The fact is that great power is unleashed, for good or for bad, for building up or for tearing down, every time we choose to open our mouths. It is little wonder, then, that James urges followers of Christ to be “quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger” (James 1:19). How utterly countercultural this is today, as we tune in to just about any talk show program and hear talking heads carp at each other with no one truly listening to the other.

On the cross, when he understandably could have cursed his tormenters or insulted his fellow prisoners, Jesus instead chose to speak words of forgiveness on behalf of those who knew not what they did and to speak words of comfort to a criminal who had little hope. May I choose this day to offer forgiveness and hope and value to those I encounter—through my words as well as my deeds. May my words build up, always.

—C. K. (Chuck) Robertson