

Choose Life; Choose Words

One

The first words that human ears ever heard were, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:27-28 KJV).

The first words God said to mankind were, “Be fruitful and multiply.” When God made all of the creatures of the earth, He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:22).

Everything that God made was good. It was blessed. God placed man in the garden of Eden to tend it, keep it, and to oversee it multiplying and being very fruitful (Genesis 2:15).

God’s intention for every man, woman, and child is to prosper—to be fruitful and multiply.¹

¹ “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all

When God spoke to Abram, he said, “I will bless you” (Genesis 12:2). When Moses spoke to Israel, he spoke of the blessing they would receive from God by walking with Him. The first 14 verses of Deuteronomy 28 are referred to as “The Blessing of Abraham.” Now, if you let your eyes only briefly view that long footnote without reading through it, stop. Go back and read it again; try to read it as if you have never heard about this before. Look at what God has promised in the Blessing of Abraham. It is a blessing that reaches far beyond finances (though it includes finances). It touches every area of our lives.

Someone might say, “But that was for those people at that time, not for us.”

It was, indeed, for those people at that time. It is also for us, today. After telling how we are redeemed from the curse of the law, Paul says in Galatians 3:14 (ESV), “so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” And in verse 29 he continues, “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.”

God did not decide to give the historic Jewish nation a blessing but then take it away in Christ. In fact, Jesus came to not only restore the Blessing,² but to usher in the New Covenant, which has even greater and more eternal promises.

peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them” (Deuteronomy 28:1-14 NKJV).

²John 10:10

The scriptures are filled with God's intentions toward mankind. In fact, His Word is His testament. I am an attorney who works exclusively in the area of testamentary law—drafting Last Will and Testaments and administering the carrying out of a Last Will and Testament after someone passes. In my area of law, we have a maxim called the “four corners rule.” This rule means that the testator's intentions are seen within the four corners of his or her Last Will and Testament. Imagine me sitting across the desk from you, holding up a will and saying, “The only thing that we can do is what the law provides and what is written within the four corners of this document.”

You might say, “But I know what Grandma wanted! She didn't want that to happen. What she really wanted was...” and you go on and explain what you believe she wanted. What you are saying does not change Grandma’s will. What is found within the “four corners” of the document is the only thing that can be carried out.

God’s Word is His testamentary document. We find words like, “I am the Lord, I do not change” in Malachi 3:6 (NKJV). We hear that God and His love to us is the same “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psalm 103:17 NKJV). His intention to bless us has not changed. Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV) says, “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” God is in the business of our blessing. Jesus said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 NKJV).

Before we look at what the Bible has to say about words and how we should use our words, it is imperative that we have this point settled in our hearts and minds. God's intentions toward us are always good, always to be blessed,

always to succeed.³ We should not try to address the way we use words without first having our mind made up on this first point: God likes me and wants me to be blessed. Does God like sin? Certainly not, but He loves sinners. Are there things that could stop me from succeeding? Absolutely. What we do is important—and we have heard many (many, many) sermons about not sinning! So many, in fact, that we might be led to believe that our behavior alone is what matters. But there's more to it than that.

Your behavior does matter, and I am in no way teaching the idea that simply “saying a few magic words” will change your life no matter what sin you are living in. You and I, we want to please God. That's why you are still reading this, taking this class, investigating the things of God. We have heard about changing our behavior. If I say the phrase “fire and brimstone,” it conjures up the image of a preacher yelling from the pulpit about sin, hell, and damnation. We are familiar with this picture; obedience to the Word has been preached. And I wholeheartedly embrace that we must walk in the light of the Word that we know. But we must also learn how to use our words to be in agreement with His Word.

And now, let's talk about words.

³Joshua 1:8

Two

It is clear that God's intention for us is blessing, abundance, and a full life. So why isn't it *automatically* that way for every believer? Assuming that the reason is not obvious sin ("You mean my being a bank robber might have something to do with my quality of life?"), it is because of our words and our choices, including what we believe.

God has put keys in His Word for us, ways to follow Him which are so simple that we needed help to misunderstand them. We get to choose life, choose the blessing by choosing our words. God lays it out clearly. It is the same for us today as it was for Moses in the Old Testament. We believe God, trust God, and choose God by choosing His Words.

God made the importance of the choice of words crystal clear through Moses. After reciting to Israel the blessing and the curse, telling them that they needed to choose between following after God or not, he says:

For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it (Deuteronomy 30:11-14 NKJV).

Did you see that? It is in your heart and in your mouth that you may do it. Our belief, our words, and our actions must be in line with what God says.

The words we use are our choice. How do we choose life instead of death?

How do we choose the blessing instead of the curse? It is with the words that we choose. God said that our words will be the deciding factor when he tells us to choose and then tells us that the word is in our mouth.

Can we simply choose the “right” words but fail to believe them in our heart, or fail to act in line with those words, and still get the blessing/life results? For many reasons, no. For the sake of this brief look at words, here is a principle reason: your mouth speaks from what fills your heart, according to Jesus (Luke 6:45). Even if you try to use a “formula for success” by saying the right words, if you do not believe it, you will eventually revert to saying what is really in your heart.

After reciting the blessing God will pour out on those who follow Him, Moses reminded the Israelites that the choice was theirs. He says:

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NKJV).

We see that life and death are set before us, and then God says “choose life.” Choose to love the Lord your God. Choose life. How do we choose life? How do we choose God’s blessing? With our words.

Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV) says that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” “The tongue” refers to the words

we speak. Earlier, we read that we had a choice between life and death, blessing and cursing. Our words can give us life, or they can give us death. Our words can help us to walk in the blessing, or they can bring us the curse. We choose life or we choose death, and we choose it with our words.

When Proverbs 18:21 says “the power of the tongue,” the word *power* is the Aramaic word for “hand,” as in, death and life are in the hand of the tongue. For example, if I am in charge of a project, that project is in my hands. The direction that a car is driven is up to the driver. It is in the driver’s hands. Death and life are in the “hand” of the tongue. We understand that the “hand” is control; it is responsibility. If I put something into your hands to take care of, it is up to you to do whatever it is.

Now re-read that verse again, inserting the word *hand* for the word *power*. “Death and life are in the *hand* of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Do you see it? Death and life—the same choice God gave to Moses and the children of Israel. This is the same choice that we have today—choose to use our words to accept Christ and enter into His life, or choose words that reject Him, resulting in death. Our words steer the ship of our lives. The blessing of the Lord, the Blessing of Abraham, is from God, but the choice to receive it is in our hand. It is not automatic for us any more than it was an automatic blessing that the children of Israel would enter the promised land. It took their agreement with God, in their words and their actions, to enter the promised land. And God made us in His image, including having the ability to choose our own words.

“Well, I don’t know if that ‘saying things’ is for me,” some reply.

It's not up to you. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Plus, as believers, we have no business saying such things. God said it, and it is our place, our responsibility to accept it and to believe it.

"But I don't think that just because I say something, it makes any difference. I don't understand how that could work."

You may not understand how computers or the internet work, but that does not stop you from using them every day. Our life with God is a journey—a journey of faith. When God has made things clear in His Word, we need to listen and believe them. We need to accept His Word as the truth, trust it, and obey it.

We don't think this way about the words we speak because all our lives, through every form of media that exists, we have heard that words are meaningless: "Talk is cheap." The devil has done all he can to minimize the importance of words and their corrupting effect on us. But what does God say? "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29 KJV). If God says not to let corrupting communication come out our mouths, then we should listen and obey.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue. We need to bring ourselves in line with what God says. We need to renew our thinking to line up with what God says about words. Our words can build a person up, or they can destroy a person's reputation. Words of a lost sinner can usher that person into the kingdom of God. How incredible is that?

Three

The scriptures are filled with instructions about our words. They overflow with plain language, simple directions, and examples of God's intentions for us where our words are concerned. I want to go through a few of them, mostly from Proverbs. This list is by no means comprehensive. It is a good start to understanding God's thoughts about our words.

Use this chapter to challenge your thinking and to process the way God thinks about our words.

Proverbs 18:20 (NKJV) says, "A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth; from the produce of his lips he shall be filled." What you have, what you accomplish, what you make of your day, your career, and your life all start with the words you say. You will be filled with what you say—good or bad.

Proverbs 26:28 (NKJV) says, "A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin." Here we see that words can crush a person. Words can work ruin in another's life.

Proverbs 6:2 (NKJV) says, "You are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth." Our words can catch us. What we say can be our own undoing. "I'll never lose this weight," or "I won't be able to buy my own house. I won't ever be able to save enough money." It is your own words that are creating this reality.

Ephesians 4:29 (NKJV) says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." Here, in the letter to the Ephesians, we have instruction, New Testament instruction that says not to speak words that are corrupting, words that work against what the Word of God says. Don't say anything that could be

used to tear yourself or others down. Don't do it. It must be possible if God is giving us the instruction so clearly.

What is the definition of a corrupt word? Whatever is the opposite of necessary edification and grace. Any word that is contrary to God's Word is corrupt. But watch out, this one is sneaky. Of course foul language is corrupt, but what about this? "You know it's flu season. My kids and I always get the flu," or "My back is killing me!" The Bible is full of healing scriptures. "By His stripes, I am healed" is in line with God's Word. "I'm going to get the flu" is not. It takes discipline, and God will help you to let *no* corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Sometimes you just have to remain silent.

Proverbs 10:19 (NKJV) says, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise." "Many words," or talking more than is necessary, can lead to sin. It can lead to saying things that are not in line with God's Word. Talking and talking and talking, a multitude of words, can lead to sin. Restrain your words and do not give in to incessant talking. Here we see something described as wise. Restraining your lips from overmuch talking is what God calls wise.

Proverbs 11:9, 11 (NKJV) says, "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered. ...By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." Here, in the beginning of verse 9 and the second half of verse 11 we see that a person can be destroyed by words. Verse 9 says a hypocrite destroys his neighbor. Why a hypocrite? Perhaps it is a person who professes to love his neighbor, but with his words utterly tears him apart. We see in verse 11 that a city can be overthrown by words. It does not say by force or by might, by

weapons or military strength, but by words. Words are at the beginning of the overthrow of a city.

Here are a few more.

Proverbs 12:13 (NKJV) says, “The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.” Several things about our words are seen here. First, we see a person being ensnared by their own words. Look at the word *ensnared*—it’s like being caught in a trap. I imagine an old-fashioned bear trap that snaps shut. Next, we see that it is not just any words, but by the “transgression” of the lips. The wicked person is trapped by saying words that they *know* are wrong; otherwise, it would not be fair to call it a transgression. When you hear a person talking, being contrary to God’s way of doing and being, you can be sure that they will be ensnared by those words. This verse comes with a wonderful promise: the righteous will come through trouble. It does not say that the righteous will never have trouble, but it does promise that they will come through it.

Proverbs 12:18 (NKJV) says, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.” Your words can cut others, like a sword, or they can promote health. It is your choice (and, frankly, your responsibility).

Proverbs 12:25 (NKJV) says, “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” This verse shows that words, good words, can make a person’s heart glad. The good word can address anxiety and depression. God’s Word is good. When Jesus was called “good teacher,” He said, “only God is good.” A good, godly word of encouragement can break depression and anxiety.

Our words are the key! Here are a few more:

A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence. He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction (Proverbs 13:2-3 NKJV).

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit (Proverbs 15:4 NKJV).

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! (Proverbs 15:23 NKJV)

The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil (Proverbs 15:28 NKJV).

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones (Proverbs 16:23-24 NKJV).

An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire (Proverbs 16:27 NKJV).

Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit (Psalm 34:12-13 NKJV).

This is a favorite verse of mine; it shows a little of God's sense of humor. Who doesn't desire life, many days, and seeing good? He does not say "then give

to the poor” or “keep the commandments.” He says that it is up to you to control your words. That is how you will see these blessings. God has already poured out His blessings on each of us; we simply need to get in line with His way of doing things.

He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil (Proverbs 17:20 NKJV).

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs 18:21 NKJV).

Most of us have heard this scripture before. Now it begins to take in a new meaning. It is a true statement, not just a pleasant Bible verse to put on a plaque and say, “Isn’t that sweet.” No! God gave the blessing through Abraham and there told the people blessing and cursing were set before them, and told them to “choose life.” Here we see death and life are in the power of the tongue. Deciding to choose life, to choose to be pleasing to God, to choose blessing over the curse must include choosing words of life, righteousness (which is God’s way of being and doing right), and blessing. Death and life are in the power of our words!

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles (Proverbs 21:23 NKJV).

What did Jesus say about words?

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of

vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matthew 12:33-37 NKJV).

Jesus put a great deal of emphasis on words. He choose His words carefully. This should be true for us as well. And we see this in our own salvation. Romans 10:9 (NKJV) says, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” It is not just what we believe, it is also what we say that ushers us into the Kingdom of God. Our words carry a great deal of weight.

Turning back to the psalms, Psalm 109:17 says, “As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; as he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.” David the psalmist is saying let it happen to him according to what he said—no blessing but only the curse.

The book of Numbers provides another great example that shows how much God listens to our words and how we need to be aware of our words. When the twelve spies came back from spying the promised land, ten of them gave a report that the land was good and plentiful, but that there were giants in the land. The people were distraught, except for Joshua and Caleb. Look at what the people said and then look at how God responded:

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! (Numbers 14:1-2 NKJV)

God responded:

How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, "As I live," says the Lord, "just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in" (Numbers 14:27-30 NKJV).

God said, "just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you." Their words were the ones used to judge them. Our words are the same today. They are the measuring stick. The children of Israel were justified or condemned by their own words. They are an example for us. As we shall explore further in the next section, our words will lead us into our own future. We have the privilege and the responsibility to use our words wisely.

Four

It is clear from God's Word that our words are important. We understand that we are to control our words. God addresses this in the book of James. James 1:26 (NKJV) says, "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless." To bridle is to restrain, as in a bridle on a horse. We have to put forth effort. We certainly can count on the Holy Spirit to help us, but we are responsible for our own words.

One thing to remember is that James grew up in the same household as Jesus. Jesus was James's older brother. James watched the way Jesus lived—and we know a few things about how Jesus lived already. We know that Jesus was pleasing to His Father. The Bible says that the just shall live by faith, and that without faith it is impossible to please God. We know that God was pleased with Jesus: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17 NKJV). Even before His public ministry, in His everyday life Jesus had to live and talk in His everyday life, even before His public ministry, pleasing to God. Jesus, without sin, lived according to the old covenant by faith. Jesus's words were always words that He believed. They had to be pleasing to God. It is not a stretch to believe that Jesus had to learn to bridle His tongue.

At His first miracle, turning water into wine, Jesus's mother told the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it" (John 2:5 NKJV). She was accustomed to Jesus using words deliberately. Stop and think about that for a moment. Mary was His mother. She hid in her heart all that had happened with the Angel of the Lord and the events that surrounded His birth. Now, thirty years later, she had watched her Son grow and mature as a young adult. He took His place in the family, in the Temple, in the local synagogue. She spoke to Jesus about the need

for more wine. Thereafter she said to the stewards, “Do whatever He tells you.” She was accustomed to Jesus using His words deliberately.

Let’s look again at James 1:26 (NKJV): “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless.” It appears that James thinks that a believer, ie, “anyone among you,” should be able to bridle his or her own tongue. Unless we believe that James is saying following Christ is useless, then we have to conclude that he believes that it is possible to tame the tongue, to bridle the tongue, to control the words that we say. Indeed, it is possible, with God's help, to control our own words. This is in line with the fruit of the spirit—self-control. It is possible for us to follow Jesus’s example and to choose our words deliberately.

In James 3, beginning in verse 2, he writes, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” Here James says a “perfect” man is able to not offend in word, and that this man—whom I refer to as a “mature” man (a person who is growing up into a mature Christian)—is able to control his entire body by controlling his words. Notice that James does not say that it is not possible to be a perfect man or that controlling your words is not even to be hoped for.

Continuing in James 3: “Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things” (James 3:3-5 NKJV). The bit in the horse's mouth does not control the horse; it is the rider who controls the reins, and the reins are attached to the bit in the horse's mouth. The bit is like the tongue, being controlled by a wise rider.

Likewise, the rudder does not steer the ship. The rudder is controlled by the mechanism, which is controlled by the captain of the ship. Both the rider and the captain have to be mature in order to make wise decisions.

It takes a mature person to be in control. James speaks of a bridle in the horse's mouth. The bridle is small, the bit is a small part of the bridle, and the horse is large and powerful. Yet the bit, controlling the horse's mouth, will control the entire horse. Try controlling the horse some other way, perhaps by pushing it from the side. It will look at you like you're crazy. It takes a mature, trained rider to properly control the bridle and properly control the horse.

James also talks of ships being controlled by a small rudder. The rudder is connected to the steering mechanism. The wheel that controls the rudder must be controlled by a mature pilot. Without a mature pilot, the ship will be shipwrecked. But a mature pilot will steer the ship to its destination, no matter the fierceness of the wind or waves. The ship reaching its destination is not a function of how good or bad the ship is or how severe the storm. It is dependent on a mature captain who can steer the ship.

James goes on to explain more about the tongue:

See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out

of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (James 3:5-10 NKJV).

Our tongue is that rudder, that bit in the horse's mouth. The tongue is set among our members as the one who sets the course or direction of our life. The word for "set" in Aramaic means fixed, as in a permanent place. It is put there as the steering mechanism by God. It sets in motion the course of nature in our lives. God is giving us insight into how life works. God did not create robots. He gives us a choice in Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV): "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." He tells us that life and death are in the power of the tongue and shows us this comparison of the rudder and the bit in the horse's mouth. The tongue—how we choose our words—is set as *the* steering mechanism in our lives.

Our words set the wheel in motion. In the same way a ship's destination is set by the rudder, and the horse's direction is set by the bit, our words set in motion the course of nature in our lives. We set our life in motion with our words.

We do not try to tame our tongue with our own power alone. Positive thinking alone will not get it done. The natural man with normal, physical ability can train animals. But the natural ability is not enough to train our tongues. Thank God, we are equipped with the full armor of God. We cast down everything in our life that is contrary to God's Word. We tame our thoughts and our tongues by bringing everything to the obedience of God's Word.

Second Corinthians 10:3-5 (NKJV) says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and

every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” God empowers us with a way to bring our thoughts into line with His Word, with His way of doing life.

It is as we submit our lives to God, giving Him lordship of every area of our lives, “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” that we can control our words. So what about James 3:8 (NKJV) that says “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” Two verses later he says “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. [There they are again!] My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:10 NKJV). I believe James is politely admonishing them not to use their tongue to curse—and he is calling on the biblical teaching of choosing blessing over cursing, life over death.

Our words, for good or bad, are setting in motion the course of our lives. If we say, “I never get any good breaks in life, I can never get ahead with money,” then we have set that wheel into motion. Everything in our life will work to fulfill those words. We set the course or wheel of nature in motion with our words. We steered the ship in that direction.

If I say, “No matter what I do, I continue to gain weight,” then that is what will take place in my life. Sure, there are other factors that are external—like the fierce winds on the ship—but it all starts with our words.

We set the course, and the angels of God go to work fulfilling His Word. And this is what sets apart the ones who are simply preaching positive thinking from the believer who is clinging to God's Word. Psalm 103:20 (ESV) says, “Bless the Lord, O you His angels, you mighty ones who do His Word, obeying the voice of

His Word.” When our words line up with His words, the angels of God go to work, carrying out His Word in our lives. Hebrews 1:14 (NKJV) says, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” It comes back to our words—what words are we saying? What course are we setting with our words?

It is up to you and me to decide. In Ephesians 4:29 (NKJV) it says “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Words can be corrupting; they can start the wheel of our lives going in the wrong direction. But God’s Word gives us the choice—life or death, blessing or cursing. When the twelve spies returned from spying the land, God called the words of the ten who said there were giants in the land an “evil report.” The words of the ten spies led a nation astray for forty years.

We can have control—the “bit” is in our mouths. But it doesn’t stop there. We have Jesus’s help, which we will see in the bonus round!

Five

This chapter is the bonus round. I call it the bonus round for a reason. We have learned so much about our words and the great impact they have on our lives, for good or evil. It's not because we decided that *we* want things to work this way, but because *God* set it up this way. Conversely, we cannot decide, "I don't think that this is for me"; "I have heard about those 'name it and claim it' Christians"; "I've tried that once and it didn't work." It is not up to us. God designed it this way. We all live under the authority of words, and as followers of Christ, we get to choose to speak His words to be in line with His will for our lives.

God set the universe in motion by His own words. When He created the universe, He said, "Light be," and light was. In fact, science learned for the first time about fifty years ago that the universe is still expanding at the speed of light. God spoke it, and it continues to this day! And God did not create the sun and moon until the fourth day. He didn't need the sun to create light. He spoke it. Things are set in motion by words.

On the third day of creation, God said, "'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so" (Genesis 1:11 NKJV). Did you ever drive past an old burger joint where they used to have drive up service, and the building is all run down or even already gone, and the only thing left is the concrete or blacktop parking lot? What happens to that unkept parking lot? Weeds and grass start to pop up through the tiniest cracks. Visit that place in ten years and you may not be able to see any concrete without digging down an inch or two. What happened? "Let the earth bring forth grass." God's word is still working, still producing. No one ever heard of an explorer going into the jungle

and suddenly finding a patch of concrete that came from the ground! Just saying that sounds silly. Of course not! God's Word is powerful, and He has given us the privilege of choosing to speak in line with His will, to speak His words.

Hebrews says that Jesus is the high priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1). One translation uses the word *profession*. Part of Jesus's ministry today is to see to it that His Word in our mouths (our profession or confession) is fulfilled. In the Old Testament, God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah and told him that He was watching to see that His Word was fulfilled (Jeremiah 1:11-12). The Amplified Bible says God is watching over His Word to perform it. We know that God's Word never fails. It always accomplishes what He sent it to do (Isaiah 55:11).

Words are important. God's Word in our hearts and our mouths is creative—it has the promise of God's support, God's backing. Imagine someone is starting a new business. They have all the cares and concerns that any new business owner has. You ask him, "Who is backing your project?"

"Warren Buffett."

"Wow, you have Warren Buffett backing you on this project?"

"Yes, I have good backing."

This person will not worry about being able to pay the bills, running out of money, or needing professional guidance. Warren Buffet is backing the new business.

We have even better backing. God is watching over His Word to perform it. When we believe God's Word and use our words to choose words that are in line with His words, God will be "backing" our project.

Take God's Word, deliberately, and apply it to your everyday life. Words are what give shape to our future. And if we will take God's Word, believe it, and

speak it, we know we have a High Priest who is watching over His Word to see to it that it comes to pass. Remember, God calls those things which are not as though they were (Romans 4:17). We are called to be imitators of God (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

So bridling our tongue, steering the ship of our lives with God's Word in our mouths is more than simply acknowledging that words are important. It is much more than that. It is seeing that we can take God's Word and apply it, knowing that God is backing those words. And it is understanding that our words, even when they are *not* in line with God's Word, are steering the ship. You are either steering the ship in line with God or not. Either way, your words are steering your life.

Our words *will* set the course of our lives in motion. The words we speak are ours to choose. Choose Blessing. Choose Life.