

Our Greatest Sin vs. Our Greatest Potential

1. Warm up: On Sunday we talked about the incredible power of the words we speak. So to get us started: What something (large or small) that someone has said to you in the last week or two that has either lifted you up or brought you down?
2. Our core scripture for Sunday was the Biblical creation story. To remind ourselves, let's again read together the first portion of that story – Genesis 1:1-12, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Some Christians believe God created the world in seven 24-hour days. Other Christians believe that God created via the process of evolution, so that the seven days of creation represent or symbolize the various stages of evolution. Which way do you see it and why? Does it matter which view we hold? If so, why?
 - b. Despite their differences, both of the foregoing views agree that God spoke creation into existence. The Genesis text repeatedly says, “God *said*, ‘Let there be light,’” “God *said*, ‘Let the dry land appear,’” “God *said*, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation.’” In each instance, God’s *words* are the energy source that causes new realities to come into existence. Psalm 33:6 and 9 sums it up like this: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. . . . For God spoke, and it came to be.” Speaking can be defined as “communicating ideas.” We humans speak by using breath and vocal cords to make auditory sounds. How do you imagine God speaks, *i.e.*, communicates ideas? What are the possibilities?
3. God spoke and 200 sextillion stars were born. God spoke and 86 billion neurons took shape in your brain. God spoke and kitty cats came into existence. The point being: God’s words are POWERFUL! But here’s what we often miss. Genesis 1:26 tells us that “God [also] *said*, ‘Let us make humankind in our image.’” In other words, God chose to infuse us with some of the same qualities and powers as God possesses. Chief among them is the power of speech.
 - a. Our words are so powerful that Jesus himself said, “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What you have *said* in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the rooftops.” Luke 12:2. Jeff interpreted that to mean that the words we speak don’t just evaporate into thin air, but rather continue to create ripple effects that impact people in ways that will reverberate for generations and throughout eternity. Do you think that’s true? Why or why not?
 - b. Each day the typical person speaks 16,000 words, which totals a whopping 467 million words in a normal lifespan. Studies suggest that when speaking about our emotions, 50% of the words we use are negative, 20% are neutral, and only 30% are positive. Other studies suggest that 70% to 80% of our internal thoughts – the things we say to ourselves – are negative. Studies done at the University of Denver and Catholic University concluded that the greatest predictor of which

marriages would succeed or fail was the percentage of negative comments a couple makes to each during the earliest years of their marriage. When you hear all this, what thoughts does it evoke within you?

- c. Lily Ebert said, “The Holocaust didn’t start with actions. It started with words.” Your thoughts?
 - d. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Life and death are in the power of the tongue.” What do you think that means?
4. Both positive and negative words have the power to create new realities. On Sunday, we explored both sides of that equation, *i.e.*, the power of negative words to destroy and the power of positive words to build up. First, let’s reflect on the power of negative words.
- a. What’s one of the most destructive or debilitating things anyone has ever said to you? How have those words affected you?
 - b. What’s one of the most destructive or debilitating things you’ve ever said to someone else? How do you think your words have affected that person?
 - c. What’s one of the most destructive or debilitating things your inner voice says to you? How do those words affect you?
 - d. When we need to say something critical to someone – a child, spouse, friend, coworker, anyone – how should we go about it?
5. Now let’s reflect on the power of positive words.
- a. What’s one of the most lifegiving things anyone – maybe your mother or father or anyone – has ever said to you? How have those words affected you?
 - b. What’s one of the most lifegiving things you’ve ever said to someone – maybe a child, spouse, or anyone? How do you think your words have affected them?
 - c. What’s one of the most lifegiving things your inner voice says to yourself? How do those words affect you?
 - d. Since Sunday was Mother’s Day, we focused special attention on the power of a mother’s words. Sara Groves tells how she once found herself wondering what her kids would say someday if asked, “What’s the most important message you carry forward from your mother?” If you’re a parent – or otherwise in an influential relationship with a child – what’s the most important message you hope your child will carry forward from you?
 - e. What’s something you’re carrying away from tonight’s conversation?

Genesis 1:1-12

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' ⁷So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.