



WORD

“The tongue has the power of life and death” (Proverbs 18:21)

The Bible does not use the term “verbal abuse,” but it has much to say about the power of our words. Verbal abuse is one weapon in the arsenal of emotional abuse.

While the tactics of abuse are many, **the ultimate goal is to gain control over someone in order to establish dominance in a relationship.** Verbal abuse is not the occasional flare after a bad day or temporary lack of verbal self-control in the midst of a tense moment. It constitutes psychological violence. Verbal abuse is a habitual sin that seldom goes away on its own and may have the potential escalate into physical abuse.

Which of the following open verbal abuses have you experienced and how did it affect you?

<i>Angry outbursts</i>	<i>threats</i>	<i>orders</i>	<i>mockery</i>
<i>manipulation</i>	<i>shaming</i>	<i>word twisting</i>	
<i>rewriting history</i>	<i>attacking personal character</i>		
<i>screaming</i>	<i>swearing</i>	<i>ridicule</i>	<i>name calling</i>
<i>blaming</i>	<i>accusation</i>	<i>criticism</i>	

Over the long term, any kind of abuse can leave the victim feeling uncertain, unable to make decisions, and drained of any sense of personhood or value. The victim begins to accept the blame and believe the crushing words that are convincingly and repeatedly thrown at him.

REMEMBER: Your value doesn't decrease based on someone's disability to see your worth. Your value is based on who you are in Christ and not how others think about you.

1 The words we speak reflect what is going on inside of us

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” - Luke 6:45

Jesus teaches that everybody produces some kind of fruit. Good fruit comes from those with good hearts, and evil is produced from those with evil in their hearts. What comes out from our lips reveal a lot about what is in our hearts. Do you want to get a glimpse of your heart? Listen to the words that proceed from your mouth.

2 Death by words.

How can someone tell when I am angry? When was the last time I was really angry? What made me so angry? How did I respond inappropriately? If I could have this situation over again, what would I do differently?

While it is tempting to minimize our angry words, thoughts, and attitudes, the truth is there can be danger in anger. This is fitting since anger is only one letter away from danger. Jesus insists that we are all guilty of murder because we've been angry in word, thought, attitude, or action. We have to recognise that unrighteous anger is murder.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matt 5:21-22 ESV)

3 My Reflection

God's heart on the subject of how we use our words is evident in Scripture. There is no question about the seriousness of the effects on the hearer or the speaker of violent, abusive words. When the words of others have hurt us, we can find healing in the true words of God. When we have hurt others with our words, we can find forgiveness in God and should also seek it from those we have harmed. These are God's desire for us:

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

*“do not let any unwholesome talk come out of [our] mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs”
(Ephesians 4:29)*

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19-20)

God intends that our words and our relationships be healthy and life giving.

4 Prayer Points

1. We have to acknowledge our unrighteous anger as sin.
2. We have to confess our murderous words and actions to those we have sinned against.
3. Ask God to reveal our hearts and humbly acknowledge and repent of our sins.
4. That we may constantly seek to nurture our relationships.
5. That we would be slow to anger always .
6. That our words would be encouraging and seasoned with grace.
7. That God may give us the grace to love those who hurt and offended us even it is difficult.