

The Power of Words

By Reta Stewart Allen

Who has not experienced the wrenching pain of an unkind word? “You are a total loser!” Or the uplifting joy of words of encouragement? “You can do it, friend!”

From the time I was a child, through adolescence and adulthood, I’ve been affected by the words of others--both spoken and written. Remember the morals of old tales that made us want to be the “good guy?” The put-downs from our schoolmates about some flaw they saw in us? The words of praise from a teacher or close friend? Our words have indescribable power to create or destroy, to build or tear down.

Perhaps that was part of what God breathed into Adam upon his creation. All God had to do was declare something and it happened. Jesus spoke, “Let there be...” and the world came into being.

Words of encouragement or words of derision, when consistently repeated, can result in “programming” that affects one’s self-image—for better or for worse.

Once when my young son was hurt by the destructive actions of a neighbor, he set out to “get even” by telling him off. The police officer who was on the scene laid his hand on my son’s shoulder and quietly said, “No, son. Don’t say that. The words we say can never be unsaid.”

Another time, when I was feeling like a misfit in school, a classmate I hardly knew approached me, as I arranged a display in the library. She smiled at me and said, “You are such a creative person.” Since then I have reminded myself: “When you see something good about someone, even a stranger, tell them. It will bless them.”

Jesus said to his disciples: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matthew 12: 36, 37, KJV)

Heavenly Father, help us remember we are responsible for our words. Let us be a blessing to others through loving words. Amen.