

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE TO GIVE LIFE WORDS

- I. Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue.
Proverbs 12:18 Rash words are life sword thrusts into the soul, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

I want to share some thoughts and scriptures about the powerful benefit that comes from words of affirmation.

II. A. Affirmations are words of praise for things that a person has done. We must not think that praising a person is wrong or idolatrous or false glory when we see God's purposes in words of praise to another human. It's true that flattering a person is false praise that someone gives that has an ulterior motive of getting a benefit returned to them.

But from a Christian perspective we're really praising the good works in others. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before hand that we should walk in." So in doing this we are also praising God for what He put in each of us. Just as someone exercises the God-given talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts. Again to quote Paul about boasting "What do you have that you did not receive." 1 Corinthians 4:7

B. There are multiple examples of God-ordained praise for people all through scripture in both the O.T. and N.T.

1. Boaz praises Ruth as a woman of worth because of her caring for her mother-in-law and her chaste behavior around the young men who worked for Boaz.

2. Jesus affirmed people in the N.T.

a. Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 tell of the same anointing of Jesus by a woman. She came into the house of Simon the Leper and anointed Jesus' head with very costly ointment. Some of the disciples were indignant that it was wasteful and could have been sold and given the money to the poor. They scolded her. But Jesus said to them: "Leave her

alone. She has done a beautiful thing. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial.” Then He says “wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in her memory.”

b. Then again in Luke 7:36-50 evidently a different woman who’s is called a sinner comes into a Pharisee’s house where Jesus was reclining at the table. She anoints His feet with oil while weeping and wipes them with her hair. The Pharisee says “if this man were a prophet He would know what sort of woman is touching Him. Jesus responds to him saying, “Who is forgiven much, loves much.” Then He says to the Pharisee, “when I entered your house you gave me no water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.” Then He said to the woman, “your sins are forgiven”. Then the Pharisees at table asked “who is this that forgives sin?” He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace. A woman now changed forever.

Romans 16:1 Paul affirms Phoebe: “Welcome her—she is a patron of many and of myself.”

III. a. So affirmations for what are commendable acts of service, displays of good character, sacrificial love, kindness, showing mercy should be affirmed when we see God is working through a person. Affirming these acts would be like Jesus saying to that person “well done good and faithful servant”. We all need words of affirmation because it’s one thing The Spirit releases to build up a person. As Paul says often like in 1 Corinthians 14:26 “let all things be done for building up.” Or in Romans 15:2 “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.”

b. That raises a question: Are words of affirmation only to be given to Christians? We can praise commendable works in unbelievers and sometimes after a while, it may lead to an open door for the proclaiming of the gospel. In Luke 7 the Jews praised a Roman centurion and asked Jesus to heal his servant because he is worthy for building our synagogue.

It is not wrong to receive or give words of praise. Godly affirmations to one another point to the image of Christ in us that we are continually being conformed to as believers.

I have personally witnessed and experienced words of affirmation that were life-changing wherever they might come from. Think of times when a word of affirmation lifted your spirit for a whole day.

When you receive a word of affirmation remember "it's not I, but Christ in me."

c. Why should we affirm others?

1. It strengthens relationships and often earns us the right to speak into their life in other ways, including corrections, in the proper balance.

2. In group settings it lifts morale and the whole atmosphere; whether a c-group or in an office or in the home.

REMEMBER AFFIRMATION IS NOT FLATTERY

3. It energizes people.

Chuck Swindoll once said: "Affirmation spurs us on. It fuels our inner fire and deepens our determination." He goes on "I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among me to be the greatest asset I possess."

A few closing comments:

1. Affirming others should never be optional for Christians.
2. Christians should always be the best at blessing others.
3. We were made to receive praise for what God does through us that is truly commendable. (Not I but Christ) That is not seeking self glory or idolatry.

NOTE: Through all the years I've seen so many young people that are affirmation starved. BUILD ONE ANOTHER UP! Parents affirm your children when they make good choices.

QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION in family or groups:

1. Think about a word of affirmation you received and how it impacted you. Share it with one another. It encourages others.
2. Discuss ways to properly affirm others. Sam Crabtree's Book Practicing Affirmation

TKB April 2020

All good affirmations are God-centered because He is the One Who puts anything in us that is worth praising. Let's be people that really build up one another.