
MONDAY MANNA
June 8, 2026**STICKS AND STONES CAN HURT – BUT SO CAN WORDS****By Robert J. Tamasy**

When I was a boy, people would repeat the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” That sounded correct, since sticks and stones can certainly inflict physical damage. However, life has taught me that words can be just as hurtful; they just affect us emotionally and mentally.

There is no greater evidence of this than with the development and escalation of what has been called, “cyberbullying.” Individuals, especially young people, being targeted on social media, text messages and emails with vicious verbal attacks. Sadly, too many of these vulnerable children and teenagers have suffered great distress as a consequence, sometimes resulting in suicide.

We would like to think this is not the case in the adult world, especially the marketplace, but we all know that is not true. In some settings, verbal abuse between superiors and subordinates, as well as between coworkers, is an everyday reality. Outbursts of anger, colleagues being demeaned in public, vindictive emails being sent, and the use of other forms of communication to disparage others are all too common.

In most cases, these are counterproductive at best, weapons for serious harm at worst. Perhaps this is one reason the Scriptures are replete with admonitions against the abuse of people with our words, whether uttered orally or presented in written form. Both the Old and New Testaments remind us of the incredible power and potential peril of the use and misuse words, especially when spoken. Here are some examples that apply to what we say aloud and in written form:

Power in a small package. We dare not underestimate the incredible impact of things we say. We should choose our words wisely. “...the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (James 3:5-6).

Force for good – or evil. Just as a hammer can pound a nail into wood and also smash someone’s thumb, the tongue has the capacity to serve and benefit others, or to deliver harsh criticism and profane language. “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be” (James 3:9-10).

Within our control. Just as a marksman would not fire a rifle before taking proper aim, we would be wise to remember that if we do not calculate the impact of the words we speak or write, they can become weapons just as easily as means for communicating information, ideas and feelings. We have the ability to choose when to speak and when not to, as well as what to say and how it should be said. “When there are many words, transgression is not avoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Proverbs 10:19).

香港工商基督徒協會 (CBMC Hong Kong Ltd)

地址：香港上環禧利街2號東寧大廈11樓1102室 Tel: (852) 2805-1923

Email: enquiry@cbmc.org.hk Web: www.cbmc.org.hk

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Tools for encouraging and building up. With so much negativity in our world, a conscious effort to rein in our words, releasing them only when they will be of positive benefit to others, as well as ourselves, can set us apart where we work in positive ways. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

© 2026. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A. Stoddard, and numerous other books and magazine articles. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time when someone said something to you – or wrote something, maybe in a memo, an email or a text message – that was hurtful for you? What kind of impact did it have on you, as well as on your relationship with that person?
2. What about a time when you said or wrote something to another person in haste or in anger, only to regret what you had said or expressed it. What was the result? In retrospect, how do you think you could have done better?
3. The Bible passages cited describe the power and impact our words can have in any setting. Why is this especially important to remember as we approach the demands and pressures of a typical workday?
4. Thinking about words spoken or written that prove to be beneficial and helpful for the intended audience, when was a time when you felt especially encouraged or uplifted by what someone said to you? How did that affect you at the time – and in the days that followed?

Challenge for This Week

This week might be a good time for some personal assessment. Are you careless in your use of words, sometimes speaking or writing hurtful or negative things without considering the impact they might have?

Sometimes it is difficult to be objective in evaluating our flaws and weaknesses. Ask someone you trust, or perhaps your accountability group or CBMC team, whether they consider you to be careful and thoughtful in how you communicate with others. Try to be open to their suggestions if they say there is a room for improvement.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 4:24, 10:20-21,32, 11:12, 13:3, 15:1,23,16:13; Matthew 5:22-24

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