

WORDS THAT STING BY CARL MCMURRAY

Words may not break bones, but research shows they may cause physical harm. In a study of more than 1,000 women, presented at the fourth annual Smart Marriages conference, emotionally abused women were more likely to report poor physical health than other women, and their reported ailments were strikingly similar to those affecting physically abused women.

“We were surprised at the magnitude of the health complaints,” says lead researcher Ann Coker, Ph.D., a University of South Carolina-Columbia associate epidemiology professor. – **Psychology Today**, Sept./Oct. 2000, p. 24

Although Bible believers don’t need it, this is simply more evidence that it pays to trust God’s word. We may not be able to quickly and easily see the damage that our words can do, but we can trust the Spirit when He says in Colossians 4:6, “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.*”

And in Ephesians 4:29, “*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.*”

The article from Psychology Today simply adds to the commands given by the Spirit. Words DO hurt. And the wounds often take great amounts of time and attention to heal. How many have wounded others by hasty words, angry words, or sarcastic “humor”? How many more will be hurt because we refuse to bridle our tongue or simply think before we speak? The idea that saying whatever is on our mind is a good trait is simply not borne out by Scripture or the facts. Those that are so quick to give others a “piece of their mind” need to be make sure they really have enough to be sharing.

On the other hand, Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:12, that we should be treating others the way that we ourselves would like to be treated, makes much more sense. Thinking before we speak to others, giving others the benefit of the doubt instead of rushing to judge their motives, and being careful about the use of sarcasm and “humor” would all go a long way toward showing courtesy and respect in our speech. As you would like to be approached, that is the way to approach another.

Don’t place the burden of ugly words on another’s shoulder. You don’t have to have a Ph.D. from Columbia to know that our Master wants us to use speech that is wise, uplifting, and wholesome. He wants us to take advantage of every opportunity to shine like lights in a dark world.