



Sermon Series Devotional

October 8 - November 11

Hinckley First United Methodist Church

Series Overview

Words carry incredible power. There is something beautiful about receiving affirmation, gratitude or love through words. On the other hand, an insult or off-handed remark can be deflating and defeating. Why do our words matter so much, and how can we be more intentional around the kinds of words we speak and share in our lives? During this sermon series we'll consider all the words we use in our daily life: from the deep conversations we have with the one we love, to the simple email we send, to the offhand comments made to co-workers.

Why a Devotional?

A vibrant and authentic faith is not grown merely in one hour on Sunday morning. This devotional will give you the opportunity to engage with God's word on a regular basis as you seek to become more like Christ each day. There is a daily Bible reading plan, as well as reflection questions that are linked with each week of the sermon series. You can use this devotional individually or in a formal or informal small group.

Daily Bible Reading Plan

October 8 - Worship	October 25 - Proverbs 17:9
October 9 - John 1:1-14	October 26 - Psalm 34:15-19
October 10 - Psalm 19:9-14	October 27 - Psalm 18:1-6
October 11 - James 1:19-27	October 28 - Psalm 142:1-7
October 12 - Matthew 12:33-37	October 29 - Worship
October 13 - Proverbs 15:1-4	October 30 - Matthew 18:15-20
October 14 - Matthew 17:1-6	October 31 - 1 John 4:20-21
October 15 - Worship	November 1 - Eph. 4:25-32
October 16 - Proverbs 10:6-12	November 2 - Proverbs 18:1-8
October 17 - Matthew 5:21-22	November 3 - Col. 3:12-21
October 18 - Matthew 7:1-5	November 4 - Romans 14:19
October 19 - James 4:1-6	November 5 - Worship
October 20 - Colossians 3:8-10	November 6 - Job 2:7-10
October 21 - Matthew 15:1-20	November 7 - Job 2:11-13
October 22 - Worship	November 8 - Lam. 3:19-26
October 23 - Mark 11:25	November 9 - Psalm 13
October 24 - Matthew 6:5-15	November 10 - Psalm 85
	November 11 - Psalm 19:9-14

- Begin your time with prayer. Ask God to speak to you, for Jesus to be revealed to you, and for the Holy Spirit to fill you as you read these words of Scripture.

- Slowly, thoughtfully, read God's Word. Pay particular attention to words or phrases that stand out to you. Write them down or take time to memorize them.

- Consider how this Scripture connects with your life today. What may God be inviting you to do, challenging you to learn, or calling you to change?

Week 1

Words Matter

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said..."

- Genesis 1:1-3

"The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

- John 1:14

- In the text from Genesis we see that the words of God have the power to bring all things into existence. Reflect on the power of your words. What can your words do or bring into existence?

- With words we can inspire. With words we can make a vow or enter into a promise. With words we can speak out in truth. Words obviously have power. Sometimes though, we underestimate the power they hold. When have you been guilty of this?

- The text from the Gospel of John poetically describes Jesus as God's Word become flesh. What do you think this means?

Series Challenge - To pray daily the words of Psalms 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and redeemer." Pay special attention to the ways you see this prayer impacting your words.

Week 2

Tear Down or Build Up

"The tongue has the power of life and death."

- Proverbs 18:21

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

- James 3:9-10

- When have the words of someone else brought you "life"?

- When have the words of someone else brought you "death"?

- Read the rest of James chapter 3. How successful have you been throughout your life of taming your tongue? What are ways that you have or can do better at being quick to listen and slow to speak?

- Read Ephesians 4:29. How are you doing in only speaking words that are "helpful for building others up"? What is one practical way that you can do better in this regard this week?

Series Challenge - To pray daily the words of Psalms 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord, my rock and redeemer." In this last week how did you sense this daily prayer making an impact on the words you spoke?

Week 3

The Most Difficult Words to Say

"The most important things are the hardest to say... The most important things lie too close to wherever your secret heart is buried, like landmarks to a treasure your enemies would love to steal away. And you may make revelations that cost you dearly only to have people look at you in a funny way, not understanding what you've said at all, or why you thought it was so important that you almost cried while you were saying it. That's the worst, I think. When the secret stays locked within not for want of a teller but for want of an understanding ear."

- Stephen King

- In your estimation, what are the most difficult words to say? No, I don't mean Worcestershire, I mean words like: I was wrong. I am sorry. I don't know. I forgive you. Goodbye.

- Why do you think it is so difficult to say things like "I'm sorry" or "I was wrong" or "Will you forgive me?" Is there anything that can make them easier to say?

- In the Scripture reading on Sunday, from 2 Samuel 12:1-13, Nathan helped David to see clearly that he had missed the mark in his life. It was because of Nathan that David knew he needed to say he was wrong and ask for forgiveness. Do you have someone like a Nathan in your life who helps to hold you accountable in the words you speak? If not, can you find and develop that sort of relationship with someone?

Week 4

Beyond Disagreement

Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing

1. Every Person is a Child of God
2. Listen Before Speaking
3. Strive to Understand from Another's Point of View
4. Strive to Reflect Accurately the Views of Others
5. Disagree without Being Disagreeable
6. Speak about Issues; Do Not Defame People
7. Pray, in Silence or Aloud, Before Decisions
8. Let Prayer Interrupt Your Busy-ness

- Bishop Sally Dyck

- The eight principles above were written as a guide for United Methodist churches as they conduct business and have conversations in conference settings, but they can apply to a range of crucial conversations that we may have in our life with co-workers, family and friends, or community members.

- Review the principles. How do they help us, as a people of faith, to engage others in conversations around difficult topics or divisive issues?

- What are some of the principles that seem more difficult than others?

- In a day and age with so much division and polarization, what is the importance of implementing these principles in all our interactions?

Week 5

When There Are No Words

"Blessed are you, who feel the wound of fresh loss.

Or of a loss... no matter how fresh...that still makes
your voice crack all these years later.

You who are stuck in the impossibility of it.

Frozen in disbelief.

How can this be? It wasn't supposed to be this way."

- Kate Bowler, *The Lives We Actually Have*

- Reflect on a time in your life when you had no words. Was it after the death of a loved one? After a diagnosis? In the midst of a time of struggling? What was the worst thing someone said to you in the midst of that difficult time? What was the most helpful thing that someone said to you? What do you wish someone would have said to you?

- The Bible is full of lamentations. Where people made it clear to God how angry and disappointed they were when things didn't go the way they thought they should. How have you expressed lament to God in your life?

- Read Romans 8:18-39. What does this Scripture tell us about the promises that God makes to us in the midst of grief, tragedy, and trial? How does this give you hope and comfort?

- We are people of resurrection hope. The Resurrection of Jesus is proof that the worst thing is not the last thing. Consider what this means to you.