

STUDY 5

Speaking Words of Love in Your Family

1 SAMUEL 1:1-8, 19-23; 16:1-13; 17:25-30

My friend Judy grew up in a warm and loving family where she was emotionally nourished with encouraging and affirming words of approval. Another friend, Dottie, received constant criticism and blame for merely existing. As a result of the words spoken in each family, who do you think is a warm and affirming adult, and who do you think struggles with feeling that she has any value?

“Sometimes we aren’t as careful about what we say to our spouse as we are to others,” confessed a young, newly married friend. This is also true of words spoken by parents to children, sibling to sibling, and one close family member to another. Whether we are married or single, we don’t always find family to be the emotionally safe and nurturing place God designed it to be. Because the words we use within our families have long-lasting influence for good or evil, let’s see

what two families in the Old Testament teach us about the importance of speaking words of love to family members.

1. Think back to how members in your family of origin communicated with one another. In what ways has this influenced how you communicate with your spouse or family members?

READ 1 SAMUEL 1:1-8,19-23.

2. What do you learn about Elkanah from this passage?
3. Compare and contrast Peninnah's and Hannah's personalities and circumstances.

4. What words might Peninnah have used to provoke and irritate Hannah (verses 6-7)?

What effect did Peninnah's treatment have on Hannah (verse 8)?

5. How did Elkanah respond to Hannah's emotional pain?

What effect might his words in verses 8 and 23 have had on their relationship?

6. Both men and women struggle with emotionally stressful circumstances. What help do you find in Hannah and Elkanah's story for supporting your spouse or another family member who is going through a difficult time?

READ I SAMUEL 16:1-13; 17:25-30.

7. How was David treated by his father when Samuel came to anoint God's choice for king (16:10-11)?
8. How did David's oldest brother respond when David asked about Goliath (17:28)?
9. What seemed to be the attitudes toward David in these two family incidents?

What long-term effects do you think rejection and put-downs like these can have on a young person?

10. Read Psalm 18:1-3, one of the many psalms David wrote. How do you think David's relationship with God helped him overcome the negative effects of his family environment?

What personal encouragement do you find in these verses?

- ✪ 11. Proverbs 10:21 says, "The lips of the righteous nourish many." The following acrostic BEST suggests ways we can nourish and encourage others:

BLESS with your words. Be kind, affirming, and gracious.

EDIFY your loved ones; build them up. Show an interest in their lives. Ask what they are doing, how God is blessing them, what God is doing in their lives.

SHARE your feelings with others in an open, calm, honest, and relaxed manner. Give others permission to do the same.

TOUCH others (in an appropriate manner) when you talk to them to show them that you care.

What do you learn from this acrostic about how to verbally love and nourish your child, spouse, or other family member?

Which of these areas come easily for you? In which areas do you want to improve?

Life Changes

12. Describe a real-life situation in which speaking words of love could make a difference in your family.

13. Write down the names of your immediate family members and ask yourself, "What nourishing words do they need to hear from me at this time?" Jot down how you can BEST speak to them and when you will do this.