

ASHER FAMILY FOUNDATION

F A I T H H O P E L O V E

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Speechless

By Larry Asher, Executive Director, Asher Family Foundation

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14

The past week and a half was spent working to commission new production equipment for a commercial bakery. One mixer was working on chocolate chip cookies, another oatmeal raisin. Chocolate chips and raisins were lined up by the tens of hundreds of pounds making their way to each of the mixers. Triple fudge with white chocolate chips on another line were making their way to the ovens. Hundreds of pounds of flour, sugar and other ingredients are mixed together according to the recipes. This is large industrial equipment, a little different than what you might find in your kitchen. Installation and startup of this type of equipment requires a number of different teams: mechanical, electrical, engineers and others. Communication is essential to coordinating efforts, not an ideal time to lose your voice.

Needless to say, that is exactly what happened to me. For the better part of three days it was difficult to speak any louder than a whisper. At first, I tried to talk. I tried to go about business as usual, even trying to make a few jokes about it. It was more frustrating than effective. Then I resorted to writing on a note pad. That too was frustrating: I would write something that led to questions which required me to write more, which led me to try and talk, which led to more frustration. Agreement was soon shown by a head nod or a thumbs-up. Disagreement likewise, a head shake or a thumbs-down. Speaking required a lot of effort, to be understood even more. As a result, I found myself choosing my words carefully and weighing whether or not it was worth the effort.

Over the course of those few days I was reminded of how the Lord calls us to account for the words we use: the words we choose to say. I recognized that when my words came easy, I did not give a lot of thought to them. Yes, I have to admit to being guilty of "foolish talk" and "coarse joking" (Ephesians 5:4). Yet, when speaking required effort, I chose my words carefully; even finding some conversations so trivial they could be avoided altogether.

In James we read about the difficulty in taming the tongue (James 3:1-12). James discusses how man has tamed many a wild animal, bird, reptiles and other creatures. But, man has not been able to tame the tongue. He describes the tongue as "a restless evil, full of deadly poison".

"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

August, 1776, was described as some of the darkest hours for a fledgling America with nearly all patriotic hearts in despair. Despite all else that was going on around him, General George Washington became concerned with the level of profanity, cursing and swearing which was becoming common practice. Recorded in his Orderly book, of that same month, was a command to his officers to set a better example and exercise influence to put this behavior in check. Washington noted they could expect “little hope of the blessing of heaven on our arms, if we insult it by our impiety and folly”. (George Washington or Life in America One Hundred Years Ago, 1875, John S. C. Abbott)

Our words matter. Our words matter to God. Our words matter to those around us. We can build each other up or we can bring each other down, this is especially true in our marriages and within our families. It seems that those we love the most are the ones most likely to be hurt by our words: those who look to us for affirmation, and acceptance - those who want to please us. Do not let the ease of our words allow us to use them recklessly without regard or worse to purposefully hurt one another.

We can challenge ourselves to choose our words more carefully and while we may find some success we are likely to find it difficult. The greater challenge is for us to examine our hearts “for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45). Applying the words of Washington to our lives, we have little hope of the blessing of heaven in our marriages and our families, if we insult it by our sinful talk and foolishness.

Let our words not only praise our Lord and Savior, let us praise his creation. Let us lift each other up for the purpose God has called us to.