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New studies indicate that most of us speak around 16,000 words a day with some folks speaking up to 47,000 words every day! That's lots of talking!

It stands to reason that we have the potential to misuse some of those 16,000 words. Proverbs 10:19 tells us that there is always sin in the multitude of words and the wise person restrains his or her tongue.

Wow, in the day of Twitter, facebook, and social media when many folks don't have an unpublished thought, I have to wonder about our potential to harm others. If we can reach others exponentially with our positive life-giving messages through social media, we also may find ourselves harming others and our own testimony.

Here's the scenario: The opportunity is there. I have a thought. I post it. Viola! The world (at least my world) sees it, whether good, bad, or ugly.

If you can't see my face when I'm speaking, if you can't hear my intonation, or gauge my intent by being present with me, then the potential for misunderstanding is great.

One young woman from the social media generation recently reminded me of wonderful world of emoticons, all the smiley faces, sad faces, etc., that we can add to our social media posts to clue folks into what we are intending. I can let you know if I'm being kind or if I'm jabbing a bit or if I'm being sarcastic by simply adding an emoticon.

Yet how many times have I (and you, too, probably) sat scratching my head at a tweet or a facebook post or a text message and wondered if that person had any idea how the message "sounded" on the other end of the communication. After all, communication is about COMMUNICATING and communicating is about being heard and understood. (I readily admit that I have made mistakes in this area, particularly by

trying to save time and text someone as opposed to calling.)

Isn't it ironic that in our efforts to be heard more that we can often be heard less accurately? Our hearts can be more misunderstood? Other folks can feel more distanced from us instead of closer? Our prejudices and judgment can stare blankly at the world without any heart connection??

Am I a social media hater? No, not at all. I tweet, use facebook, text, I'm linkedin, I Digg, I Stumble Upon, the list goes on and on. I believe in using the tools God has given us to get life-giving messages out. That's why I am writing this! How can we use these tools more effectively? How can we do it better?

Here are four things to consider as you weigh your words:

1. 1. Stop and think before you write. See if your thought can stand the test of time.

Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

James 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

2. 2. Ask God and yourself if what you plan to say comes off as arrogance.

Proverbs 18:2 A fool find no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

3. 3. Check your words to see if they are life-giving.

Proverbs 16:23 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 25:11 A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt.

4. 4. Ask yourself if your words are reckless.

Proverbs 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment

for every careless word they have spoken.

James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceived himself and his religion is worthless.

1 Peter 3:10 Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

You see it all goes back to this principle, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue and they who love it will eat its fruit.” Proverbs 18:21

How will you use your 16,000 words today?

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