

Preface

“The tongue has the power of life and death.”
(Proverbs 18:24)

I remember the old saying, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but **words** will never hurt me.” I used to think this was true. Then I realized two things: First, words do hurt, they can cut deep and crush your spirit. Second, the more important the person is to you who says these words, the greater the impact. Most people would agree that when a complete stranger says unkind or derogatory things to you, for no reason, you probably would shrug them off, unless you are a hothead. Nevertheless, it may still bother you. Now if your good friend rebukes you, that’s another story. You will probably feel somewhat hurt and offended. You are prone to feel much more angry and saddened and react more strongly if your boss, spouse, sibling, and grandparents put you down. It can really hurt when your mother says harsh words. Some people are more deeply affected by what their mothers say than others, depending on the depth and closeness of their relationship. A mother’s words have great impact on her children’s lives.

A father’s words can make or break his children. Why do a father’s words have such a profound impact on his children? Is it because of his role in the family and his children’s

critical need to be loved, accepted and affirmed by him? Some children never had that close relationship with their father that they yearn for, yet they still are affected and shaped by their father's words and actions. Father-child relationships vary from non-existent and weak to open and strong, but they all have one thing in common. No matter what age, especially during the formative years, fathers' words affect their children. Some of you have fond memories of your father's words. How did it make you feel as a little boy or girl, or teenager when your father said, "I love you." What does it feel like now? "I am blessed to have you as my son." "You can do it Cindy, I believe in you." "I am so proud of you." "I feel happy for you." "Congratulations Natalie, let's celebrate your victory!" Words like these exert a tremendous impact on children, especially when they come from their fathers. Some of you may have painful memories. Fathers can say things that crush and devastate their children. "You're stupid!" "Why would you ever pick something you'd fail at?" "You disgust me." "I hate you." "I'm too busy, go away." "You'll never amount to a hill of beans." These words communicate animosity, discouragement, defeat, and hopelessness. They pound a child's character. Some words are blatant and downright cruel, while others are more subtle but undermining.

I have devoted my entire career to fathers and their children. I have seen the hurt and pain caused by insensitive fathers and harsh, brutal words and behaviors toward their children. I have also seen God heal these relationships. I have seen relationships restored. I pray that fathers will understand, change, and heal through this book. I want fathers, their children, and loved ones to know that this can happen with Christ when fathers seriously address this issue. I want fathers to speak words of life, healing, growth, and encouragement to their children. I want them to bless their

children. I want fathers to inspire their children by their words and actions to live Godly lives so they can do the same with their children, until Christ returns. All these things and more are possible through Christ. Be courageous fathers. I encourage you and challenge you to understand your effect and the impact of your words on your children. Apply the strategies in this book. Bless your children!