



Is Rude the New Normal?

Truth about the lashon hara

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The Bible says that the power of life and death is in the tongue. Words can build up or words can tear down. South Carolina Congressman Joe Wilson found such an idea to be true after he recently spoke up against President Obama in an untimely fashion. Hip hop rapper Kanye West learned the same lesson this week after he rudely interrupted singer Taylor Swift's acceptance speech at the MTV Music Video Awards. And professional tennis champion Serena Williams wasn't very professional when she let out a vulgar tirade at a match and was eventually fined ten thousand dollars. Words, truthful or not, can hurt when spoken in at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

The purpose of the spoken word is to express the emotions of the heart, to build up or tear down. Words are thoughts verbalized. The Messiah said in Matthew 12:34, "The mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart." What we think, what we believe will eventually manifest through the mouth. Herein lies the battle of the ages, we must choose to speak either life or death. For in a split second our innermost thoughts can become our outermost expressions. We must choose our words carefully. Washington Irving once said, "The tongue is the only tool that grows sharper with use." While, the Psalmist prayed, "Set a guard over my mouth, keep watch over the door of my lips," Psalm 12:4.

We must constantly be on guard against evil speech, called "lashon hara" in Hebrew. This includes ANY negative communication like gossip, slander, slur, lying, or perverse speech. We all know people who claim to be super-spiritual believers yet their witness is destroyed by a tongue full of gossip. Such religion is a farce according to James 3:2-11. Evil speech is dangerous as it hurts three people: "he who relates it, he who accepts it, and of whom it is said." The basis against speaking lashon hara is found in Leviticus 19:16 & 17 "Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life." Exodus says, "do not spread false reports," and in Titus 3:2 the

word tells us to “speak evil of no man.” Truly, these verses are speaking against more than just lying. Lashon hara is negative or perverse speech – even if it is true. A biblical example of lashon hara is the twelve spies who were sent to inspect the Promised Land. The ten fearful spies who brought a negative report were spreading lashon hara while the two spies whose report was made in faith spoke words that glorified the Creator. Either our words are full of faith or fear, life or death blessing or curses.

Like a super computer that just needs to be programmed correctly, your tongue’s output will equal your mind’s input. This could be why we are told in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” From thinking on things that are of good report we ourselves will become of good report. Sadly, such an idea is foreign to many in the modern culture. Because of his outburst Representative Wilson was rebuked on the House floor and Kanye West was booed off the MTV stage. Hopefully, society we can learn from these examples and stop the spread of evil speech. “You will have to give an account for every idle word you have spoken,” Matthew 12:36.