

Lavish Grace Week 2
How to Use Words to Inflate, Rather Than Deflate
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A few weeks ago, my seven-year-old was performing what he called “an experiment.” His experiment consisted of water, toilet paper rolls, and spoons. As you can imagine, this “experiment” wasn’t exactly clean.

Quite the opposite, in fact.

He soaked the toilet paper rolls and then made a mess all over my recently cleaned bathroom floors. When I walked into the bathroom and saw the mess, my initial reaction was far from graceful.

“What were you thinking?” I blurted out, not yet realizing how hurtful those words would be to my sweet boy.

It didn’t take long for me to see my mistake, though.

His eyes filled with tears as he did his best to explain what he was trying to do. The more he talked (and cried) the lower I sank. What kind of mother makes her son feel this way? How could I be so hateful?

It’s sad, isn’t it, that those who are closest to us often get treated the worst?

My family, more than anyone else, catches the heat when I have a bad day. Is that the case for you too?

Over the course of this lesson, we’re going to look at what Paul had to say about graceful language. What are our words supposed to do for those around us? What does it mean to speak with grace?

I’m so excited you’re joining this study. Let’s dig in!

What Paul Learned About Grace

Have you ever met someone who didn’t really deserve grace? Maybe it’s a difficult child at the school where you teach or a spouse who has hurt you yet again. Or maybe it’s a friend or sibling who betrayed you.

Saul, who later went by Paul, understood what it was like to be someone who didn't deserve the kindness of those around him.

Read Acts 6:8-8:3. What was Saul like BEFORE his conversion?

How would you have felt, as a Christian, if Saul came to your home? Do you think you would have trusted him after he claimed to have a conversion experience? Why or why not?

Many in the early church, understandably, struggled to accept Saul as one of their own. But, there was one man who put his neck on the line for Saul. That man was Barnabas.

Read Acts 9:1-31. Then reread verse 27:

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.” (NIV)

What specifically did Barnabas do for Saul? How do you think Barnabas' actions might have changed Saul's life?

God used Barnabas to pour grace onto the life of Saul, and I'm certain that grace changed his life. Grace, after all, is powerful. It changes people from the inside out.

Has anyone ever given you grace that you didn't deserve? How did it change you?

What Paul Taught About Grace

Saul witnessed God's grace firsthand when Barnabas, and then the other early Christians, welcomed him into their fold. Saul was a murderer, a persecutor of Christians, and a self-righteous, hateful man. But then he came face-to-face with Jesus and Jesus' followers.

Saul (Paul) went on to become the greatest missionary who ever lived. He also went on to write a large percentage of our New Testament.

In the letters Paul wrote, he shared often about God's grace and how we should be pouring out His grace on others.

Read Ephesians 4:29.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (NIV)

Based on this verse, what are our words supposed to do for those around us?

In Kathy Howard's Bible study, *Lavish Grace*, Kathy compared our words to the air in a beach ball. When we use “unwholesome talk,” it's like we're sucking the air right out of a beach ball. On the other hand, when we use good and uplifting words, it's like we're blowing air into the ball.

“Like air blown into that limp beach ball, good and edifying words encourage and build up an individual, helping them reach their full potential in Christ.” (Week 4, *Lavish Grace*).

Have you ever been lifted up and encouraged by someone's words? Please describe.

On the flip side, has someone ever said something to you that completely deflated you? Describe.

Do your words typically lift others up or deflate them?

Read Luke 6:45.

“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”

What does this text tell us is the source of hateful words?

Now read Galatians 5:22-23.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

List each of the fruits of the Spirit below. Place a star next to the ones you most often struggle with. Then spend a few moments in pray, asking the Lord to help you in your areas of weakness.

What Grace Looks Like in Our Lives Today

James, the brother of Jesus, also wrote about our words and their power.

Read James 3:1-12. What 3 things did James compare our words to in verses 3-6?

When my son did his “experiment” and made a mess of our bathroom, my words didn’t help him reach his full potential. They didn’t lift his up. Instead, they deflated him, literally. I actually watched his shoulders sink.

Ugh, that was a terrible sight. I don't want my words to "deflate" those I'm closest to, and I bet you don't either.

So how can we make sure our words INFLATE instead?

Here are a few practical tips.

How to Use Words to INFLATE Rather than DEFLATE:

1. Use fewer words.

Proverbs 10:19, in the NLT, says this, “Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.” It makes sense that the fewer words we use, the less likely we will be to sin. This is especially true when you’re already upset.

2. Be quick to listen.

James 1:19 says this, “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” (NIV)

3. Focus on the positive.

This is especially the case if you’re discussing something that has the potential to hurt feelings.

4. Offer grace generously.

Remember just how much God has forgiven you of. This will help you offer grace more generously to others.

5. Pray in the middle of the mess.

In particular, pray this prayer from Psalms 19:14: “*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*” (NIV)

What You Learned This Week About GRACE:

What You Want to Work On Now, As a Result of This Lesson:

Time To Pray About It:

Gracious Father, help us this week to be people of grace. Help us shower those we are around with love and kindness and gracious words. When we are tempted to utter a word that isn't uplifting but is instead deflating, help us hold our tongues. In Jesus Able Name I pray, Amen.



Lindsey Bell is the author of Unbeaten: How Biblical Heroes Rose Above Their Pain (and you can too) and of the parenting devotional, Searching for Sanity. She's also a speaker for women's events and mom groups.

Lindsey writes weekly at www.lindseymbell.com about faith, family, and learning to love the life she's been given.

