



Encouraging Words with DARLENE SALA

If You Can't Say Something Nice...

The devotional magazine *Our Daily Bread*^d tells of an elderly grandfather who was wealthy but quite deaf, so he decided at last to buy a hearing aid. A couple of weeks after his purchase, he stopped by the store where he had bought the device and told the manager that he could now pick up conversations quite easily, even in the next room.

"Your relatives must be very happy to know that you can hear so much better," beamed the proprietor.

"Oh, I haven't told them yet," the man chuckled, "I've just been sitting around listening—and you know what? I've changed my will twice!" His family will probably never realize how much their words cost them!

The book of James observes, "The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark" (James 3:5). Yes, words are powerful. The Psalmist compares them to swords and arrows when he notes that men "sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows" (Psalm 64:3).

On the other hand, words can bring great comfort and hope. "Reckless words pierce like a sword," says Proverbs, "but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12:18). "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).

Did your mother ever tell you, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all"? I was never very successful getting my kids to stop arguing by telling them that, though I tried. But it's scriptural, for the Bible says, "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

Since James says our religion is worthless if we can't rein in our tongues (James 1:26), we would do well to start our day with David's prayer: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

H.G.B., *Our Daily Bread*, produced by Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, MI, January 12, 1973