



Betty M. Hockett

The age I am now makes me glad for several reasons: (1) My hair has turned almost as white as my Grandma's cotton-like hair in all the years I knew her. I always hoped for hair that looked like that. (2) Our children, their offspring, and the next generation also, love my husband and me. Not all grandparents can brag about that. (3) God promised his help even unto this time of our lives, and for that we thank him. (4) We appreciate university-age friends who enjoy coming to visit us. They pray for us, even as we pray for them—a special privilege for Grandpa and Granny. (5) So far my eyesight functions well, a gift from the Lord. Reading remains my favorite pastime.

A few months ago, a speaker reminded us that whatever we are when we're young, we become more so as we age. I'm challenged to continue working on this thought, trusting God for his help as I advance in years and my hair grows even whiter.

BIBLE READING: Matthew 12:33-37

God created our brains with a language center, but since I'm not a medical person, I don't actually know anything about that part of our anatomy. I do know, however, that it's a vital part of our being. A stroke or brain injury can cause the language center to function improperly.

My active imagination pictures a huge pile of words stacked up like firewood in the language center, ready for use at a moment's notice. Today's Bible reading makes it plain that each person's heart-life influences that supply of words. It's a scary thought, but we have the choice of words we want to use—for good or for evil.

Mauri Macy, minister of music at Newberg Friends Church, wrote a delightfully tuneful song that our Young Friends Singers sometimes sing. We older folks occasionally sing it as well. The words impart a healthy theology:

“Good Speak”

Good speak is better than bad speak
But bad speaking's easy to do.
And if I had a dime for every single time
Bad speaking came from me
How rich I would be.
Complaining makes me feel discouraged
Exhausted and so often blue.
So I'll try to start good speaking.
How about you? How about you?

Used by permission. Mauri Macy ©1985

SONG: Take My Life, and Let It Be (Give special attention to the first phrases of the third stanza.)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, please help me live close to you, so I can focus on choosing good speak.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: James 3:1-10

As a writer, I enjoy choosing the right words for everything I write—fiction or non-fiction. What words can precisely express what I intend to say? I aim for all of my readers to know for certain what I mean through what I write in every sentence. Fortunately there's usually time to ponder about the right words and to make changes, if necessary, before the written piece leaves my computer for public consumption. That's important, because readers usually do not have opportunity to ask me to explain what I meant in this sentence or that.

But what about words I say? What sorts of words have I stored in my language center? What words have I read or heard said on television? What words have rubbed off on me in my association with others? Are all of those words ones that I want in my store of words?

Do I spend as much time choosing the right words to say as the time I spend to choose words for a written piece? Probably not, because conversation most often occurs right on the spot, so what I say is what the listener hears with no chance for me to call the words back.

The life I live influences what I say. I want to consistently live close to God, allowing him to prompt my brain's language center for "good speak" only.

"How about you? How about you?"

SONG: Spirit of the Living God

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Thank you, Jesus, for creating us with ability to speak words of comfort and love. Help me carefully choose the words to say in all situations today.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Luke 13:10–17

We once knew a woman who always gave what we privately called an “organ recital” when asked, “How are you?” Her reply contained negative details about “this” hurting and “that” having turned painful and “something else” flaring up recently. She could also add the doctor’s advice of what to do for “this” and “that” and “something else,” along with the likely prognosis.

Need I explain why we finally quit asking “How are you?” She probably had all those ailments, but I must say that after awhile her negative explanations did not amount to “good speak” or bring on a feeling of compassion for her.

Another friend truthfully did suffer from a serious debilitating illness. One day when I asked “How are you?” she replied with “good speak”: “The real me is fine.” I have quoted that example to many others since then, people who endure physical problems—sometimes permanently, sometimes short-lived. Always a smile lights up the face. “That’s right.”

Reading about the woman Luke mentions makes me wonder what she said to those who asked about her health and well-being in those 18 years she endured a bent back. Did she complain? She certainly had a right to do so. Or did she smile and tell about her faith in Jesus? We don’t know, of course, but according to Luke, her first moment of being healed brought forth “good speak”—a positive praise to Jesus.

What positive words can I choose today?

SONG: The Great Physician

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me today to speak positive words, the truth of your great love.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Job 16:1-5; Acts 15:32; 20:1-2;
Colossians 4:8*

In 1985 our oldest daughter, Christine, lay seriously ill in the hospital with viral encephalitis. I spent many hours each day at her bedside. We prayed, wondering what God had in store for her. Could she continue as a nurse? Could she fulfill her desire to serve the Lord as a missionary nurse?

One day a close friend, wise and caring, visited us in her hospital room. His words to Christine continue to resonate in my mind, even after all these years. “Christine,” he said, “all you need to do is to let God be God.” He could not have chosen more powerful words of encouragement.

We kept those words in our hearts and minds as we watched her struggle during recovery to regain use of her left leg and arm. How glad we were that we could let God be God. The end result? In due time he allowed her to continue as a nurse, even as a missionary nurse.

God means for his family to encourage one another. Many opportunities arise for us to offer words of encouragement to others: those who languish on a sickbed, temporarily or mortally; family or friends experiencing financial stress; someone deep in a season of sorrow; a person anxiously awaiting results of a medical exam or surgery.

Perhaps such conversation doesn’t come easily. So how do I know what to say? Ask God, and he will bring to your mind the right words—words of encouragement.

SONG: Take the Name of Jesus with You

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, help me take your name wherever I go today that I might encourage others around me.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Luke 10:27-35

Several months ago the speaker at our Wednesday night prayer meeting gave us a clear insight into her life. At that time she led evangelistic crusades in Africa with many coming to know Jesus and his authentic love for the first time. Before this productive ministry, which began after the death of her husband, circumstances made her life almost unendurable for decades.

She always felt unloved, she told us, even as a baby. It wasn't until her mid-teens that she at last heard the words she had all of her life longed to hear: "I love you." Of course the man who said those thrilling words captured her heart and, defying her parents, they ran away to get married. Unfortunately, however, he did not live up to those words of love that so enthralled her. She suffered from his abuse for many years.

Early in her marriage when life had already become intolerable, a pastor introduced her to Jesus, who offered genuine love to her starved spirit.

Her story proved that words of love sometimes turn out as "bad speak"—not backed up with actions that show authentic love. Jesus' words of love as shown in the Scripture can be counted upon as good speak—the honest truth, far deeper than the romantic connotation.

How does Jesus wants us (me) to let others know that our (my) words of love are genuine? What can we (I) do to show our (my) love, not just tell? After all, actions speak louder than words.

SONG: Jesus Loves Even Me

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Jesus, thank you for your authentic love. Help me show your love to someone, who today needs that assurance.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Jeremiah 42:3-6

In 2012 our daughter, Christine, and her husband, Jeff, transitioned from 20 years of missionary service in Kenya to Kampala, Uganda. They began to settle into a new-to-them culture that included language classes, a different daily pace, and responsibilities with many unknowns yet ahead. They quickly learned to love their new Ugandan friends and Christian colleagues. God granted them patience for the weeks they waited for special papers that allowed them to arrange for a truck to transport their belongings from Kenya to Kampala.

At last drivers and loaded truck headed north. We prayed for everything to arrive safely. Then we heard, "There are complications at the border." Family and friends prayed even more diligently that thieves would not steal anything from the truck as it sat waiting for clearance to enter Uganda.

One day during this time I met with two friends to interview them prior to beginning a short writing assignment. I mentioned our concern. With no hesitation one of them offered, "Let's pray right now." Immediately a blessing enveloped me like a warm blanket on a cold day. We bowed our heads there in the Friendsview front lobby and prayed in sight of all passing through.

They could have assured me that they would pray, and I would have felt blessed. But the "right now" part was special. All else within sight and sound stopped as far as I was concerned. Now I know for sure the importance of "telling it to Jesus" at the moment of need, no matter where or when.

SONG: Tell It to Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me not to hesitate to pray when someone tells me of a need, even if it's in plain sight of life going on around us.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Psalm 84:1-4; John 14:1-4;
2 Corinthians 5:1*

God has always blessed me with a good home, no matter its size or location: a comfortable place filled with goodness and kindness and warmth, with our family's needs met, that invited my return. I knew that there I was loved and cared for. Within the culture of those homes, I learned about God and his love—that he had the perfect plan for my life.

When I wrote my life story a few years ago, my mind returned to those homes. As it happened, some of them still remained: one made into a real estate office—where the employees allowed me to go inside to remember long-ago days—and another one where the resident preferred not to invite me in. (I didn't blame her for not wanting a total stranger to traipse through her house.) Even though many decades had elapsed since I called those houses "home," I easily recalled the happy memories.

For 10 years before my husband's retirement, God gave us the privilege of visiting mission fields. We enjoyed those trips, working and ministering, but always we remarked upon our return: "It was good to be away, but it's nice to be home."

At my age *home* carries a different deeper meaning. Today's Bible reading tells of the wonderful home Jesus has prepared for us. Although I still love coming home to our Friendsview apartment, I know that there's an even better place that awaits—filled with God's perfect, authentic love and totally surpassing everywhere I have ever lived.

SONG: When We All Get to Heaven

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, thank you for the wonderful home you have prepared for me in heaven. Please help me live close to you, so I can focus on choosing "good speak" every day.

—Betty M. Hockett