

Eating Your Words
by
Richard Koehneke

“Lord, let my words today be sweet and tender, for tomorrow I may have to eat them!”

That little prayer at the beginning of the day, and throughout the day, can save many a heartache and heartbreak, not only for those whose lives you touch, but for yourself as well. There is power in words: power to wound or heal, power to build up or tear down, power to produce tears or laughter. We have a choice in the words we say. Which will it be?

“Eating your words” usually means the embarrassing experience of having to take back something you said in a moment of frustration. As the saying goes, “If you say everything that’s on your mind in a moment of anger, you will probably make the best speech you will ever live to regret.” How true.

But let’s look at “eating your words” from a different and deeper perspective. Jesus tells us that we will receive what we give, and sometimes we receive in abundance when we give a little. That’s the principle of planting and harvesting. The seed of a single harsh word or phrase can yield a harvest of years of mistrust, suspicion, and alienation. The seed of a word fitly spoken can produce much comfort, hope, and joy. The plants that are produced by the seeds of our words bring forth their own seeds and plants “after their own kind” so to speak. Then we eat the fruit from those plants, sweet or bitter.

Don’t be fooled by the schoolyard chant, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me!” The truth is that sticks and bones may break your bones, but words can break your heart – or make your day.

And yes, we do have choices regarding the words we say. “I couldn’t help it” is a total copout not worthy of one in spiritual leadership. When you feel yourself heading in that direction, just pray that little prayer: “Lord, let my words today be sweet and tender, for tomorrow I may have to eat them!”