

Lovely Luscious Lips

By April Barr

Have you ever seen the demonstration where toothpaste is squirted from a tube onto a plate? The challenge: A volunteer has 30 seconds to place toothpaste back into the tube with a toothpick. The result: A small amount of toothpaste is quickly smeared back into the tube, leaving a plate full of messy, sticky toothpaste.

Words are like the toothpaste example – What comes out is difficult to take back. Have you been hurt by words? Have you said something that you wish you could take back? Typically I get a quick reply of *yes*, accompanied by a look of sadness.

For the majority of women, the words that pour out of our lips can be a constant battle! Although we can apologize, once they have been spoken, the impact remains, whether positive or negative.

Since women struggle with words, let's do a quick self-evaluation. Do your lips speak words that are tools of construction, building up yourself and others, or are your words weapons of destruction? What expressions come from your face – soothing smiles or disapproving scowls? What about "the look" – you know, the one that silently screams, "I wish you were dead!" or "What a stupid comment!"

I remember when I was recently married, having one of those common "discussions" that evolve from learning how to share space with your spouse. During our conversation, my husband told me that I was giving him "the look of death." I was shocked and quickly defended myself.

He ushered me to the mirror to show me the expression on my face. What I saw was alarming and ugly! I was giving my closest friend a horrible, mean look while debating my position in our disagreement. I might have been stylishly dressed with well-groomed hair and make-up, yet my words and expressions were unattractive!

Value of words

James 3:4 states, "A word out of your mouth can accomplish nearly anything – or destroy it! It only takes a spark to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that." Just as a hurricane, tornado, or fire destroys neighborhoods and lives, our words can cause mass destruction and disaster to others!

Negative self-talk – for example, telling yourself, "I am ugly, not smart, not good enough, not pretty enough, not worthy or loveable" – destroys your spirit.

In the same way, when you speak profane, critical words about other people, those words go down to the inmost parts and damage others. (Proverbs 26:22) For example, when we as women choose to play the deadly game of comparisons, often destructive feelings of envy, jealousy, and coveting result. Then, to comfort ourselves, we spew or gossip hurtful words, which may be truth or lies.

April's beauty tips for your lips

There are numerous helpful products that assist in making lips look lovely and luscious! With options ranging from lip moisturizers and plumpers to pencils, glosses, sticks, and stains, you are sure to find something for smoother, softer lips.

- Find an excellent moisturizer and use consistently in order to protect, calm, and soothe lips, especially in the winter to avoid dry, irritated, cracking lips.
- For softer, smoother lips, after brushing your teeth, gently rub your tooth brush over your lips to remove any dead skin. You can also purchase lip treatments that will renew and exfoliate dry, flaky skin.
- In order to ensure lip color that does not easily wear off, define and fill in lips with liner; then add a similar shade of lipstick. For even more color, shine, or intensity, use lip gloss – avoiding glosses that feel sticky.
- To have longer-lasting lip color, apply lipstick and then place a small, thin piece of toilet paper or Kleenex over the lips; with the paper still on your lips, lightly brush powder over the paper and then remove the paper.
- Lip plumpers are formulated to enhance the natural color and shape of the lips by increasing circulation. Plumpers have moisturizing gloss that provides nourishment while being infused with special technology to plump lips, instantly maximizing the volume of your lips and giving a fuller, pouty look. Lip plumpers can be applied over or under lip color.

It only takes a few seconds to destroy people with these hurtful words, yet it can take a lifetime to rebuild and heal. It has been said by psychologists that for every one negative comment, it takes at least 10 positive statements to begin to rebuild a person's self-esteem.

Life-giving lips

At the beginning of 2006, my husband and I attended an excellent seminar pertaining to the power of your words taught by our pastor, Robert Morris. While reviewing what I had learned, I felt a deep conviction that God wanted me to consistently focus my attention throughout the year on Proverbs 18:21, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

I have a choice between using my lips to speak life or death. I can be careful of what words come from my mouth by choosing each day to speak words of life to myself, others, and God by having a heart of praise and gratitude. (Psalm 35:28) As Proverbs 16:24 reiterates, "Kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." The other option is to foolishly spew death.

A solution that helped me refine my words, creating luscious, lasting lips, was to practice the three "P's":

Pause: STOP before I speak.

Ponder: THINK before I speak.

Pray: ASK God to help me put a guard or muzzle around my lips.

Remember to be kind to yourself – It takes time to break a negative cycle of destructive words. In the beginning I often had to rewind and apologize, wondering if I would ever be more consistent in speaking life over death. Having a teachable heart, humility, and courage allowed me to partner with God, allowing him to tame my tongue. As I consider the past year, I can see, as well as being told by those closest to me, that I consistently experienced and emitted more LIFE than death from my lips!

What words and expressions will you choose to speak? Hopefully you will desire to use your lovely, luscious lips as tools of construction, speaking encouragement that will build effective relationships instead of weapons of destruction that will bring division.