

## Featuring Ted Lowe

### Introduction

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” We’ve all heard that children’s rhyme, but it’s not really true, is it? Words *can* hurt us. They have the power to build us up or tear us down . . . especially words that come out of the mouths of those closest to us.

You look to your spouse—the person who knows you best—for emotional safety, security, and encouragement. Your spouse looks to you for the same. So, what can you do to maximize the power of your words in order to build up your spouse and make your marriage the best it can be?

### Discussion Questions

Watch *The Power of Words* video together before discussing these questions.

1. Talk about a time when someone’s words (other than your spouse’s) either built you up or tore you down. What were the long-term effects of those words?
2. Do you tend to respond to conflict in your marriage by arguing or by giving your spouse the silent treatment? What are some of the costs of your approach?
3. What are some reasons we say the things we don’t want to say and don’t say the things we do?
4. Tell your spouse one thing you admire about him or her. How do you benefit from that quality in your spouse?
5. Under which of the H.A.L.T. conditions (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) are you likely to speak unkind words to your spouse? What are some things you can do to slow down and avoid saying something you don’t mean?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to speak more positive words to your spouse? How can this group support you?

### Moving Forward

You are privileged with the opportunity to experience deep intimacy with another human being—to truly know someone and to be truly known. Your relationship with your spouse is a gift from God. It probably doesn’t always feel that way, but it is. Make the most of that gift. Choose to speak words that build your spouse up and bring healing.

### Changing Your Mind

*Careless words stab like a sword,  
but wise words bring healing.*

**Proverbs 12:18 (NCV)**

### For the Ride Home

Ask each other the following questions:

1. What is one thing you wish I'd say to you every day?
2. What is one thing you wish I'd stop saying to you?

### Exercise

If you want to change the way you speak to your spouse, it will require you to be aware and intentional. It's easy for us to fall into a rut with our spouses because we interact with them every day. Sometimes, we're not even aware of the things we say. We don't recognize when we're being kind or cruel.

To improve your awareness and intentionality, do the following exercise for the next week. When you interact with your spouse:

- Do not use the phrase, "You always . . ."
- Do not use the phrase, "You never . . ."

The instructions are simple, but if you're like most people, you'll be surprised by how often you're tempted to place blame on your spouse by using one of those two phrases. Even if you *know* your spouse deserves blame, resist the urge to use those phrases. Slow down. Take time to reflect on the role you've played in the conflict. Consider how you can pour into your spouse in a positive way.

If you find the exercise helpful (and convicting), you may want to ban "You always" and "You never" from your vocabulary for longer than a week.

