



The Power of Words (PART I)

BY ZORO THE DRUMMER

The following was adapted from Zoro's message at MorningStar's Vision Conference December 31, 2022, at 10:30 am.

Since I was young, I have learned to cling to words. Though, I have not always loved words. I grew up with a single immigrant mother who raised seven children. Our life was extremely difficult. I learned early what would get me through life would be words. I understood the power of words: words from the Bible, words my mother spoke in motivational quotes, then words I would find and speak.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). God said in Genesis 1:3, **“Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.”** In verse 6 He said, **“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.”** In verse 9 God said, **“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear.”** And finally, in verse 11 God said, **“Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth; and it was so.”**

The Scriptures confirm that God simply spoke light into existence. When He said, **“Let there be light,”** notice He did not start working on light for the next 80 trillion years. No, in fact, everything God created He spoke into existence through the power of words. The Bible says we were also made in His image (see Genesis 1:27). This means we are different from all other animals. He gave us the same power of words to create

worlds with our lives by the things we say—both good and bad. The truth is, just about everything we do begins with a declaration of words.

When someone dreams of going to the Olympics, they will say, “I am going to win a gold medal.” If someone wants to get even, they will say, “I’m going to get even with that person.” Almost everything we do, we speak first. If not aloud, we say it in our minds. Stuart Chase, the author of *The Tyranny of Words*, said, “Words are what holds society together. Without them, we should not be human beings.” English author and poet Rudyard Kipling said, “Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.” That’s a heavy statement. Every war began and ended with a proclamation of words. It’s crazy how much power words have, but we must learn to control that power by controlling our tongues.

We don’t have much control over what happens to us or what other people do to us, but we do have control over what comes out of our mouths. Words also help shape our future. What is the prophetic if not words that shape, determine, and change our individual futures? God tells us about our future through the words of His

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prophets. The words we speak have incredible ability to shape destinies and greatly impact lives. You have more power than you think!

Listen to what one famous person’s mother said: “My mother said to me, if you become a soldier, you’ll be a general. If you become a monk, you’ll end up as the pope. Instead, I became a painter, and wound up as Picasso.” Those were the words of Pablo Picasso’s mother. She gave him a vision for life saying, whatever he did, he would be the greatest. Listen to what another famous person’s mother said: “My doctor told me I would never walk again. My mother told me I would. I believed my mother.” This was Wilma Rudolph, Olympic track and field champion of 1956 and 1960. Which words will you believe?

The reason I am in ministry today is because words were spoken over me that shaped my life. More than anything, my life has been shaped by words which were prophesied, prayed, and spoken over me. You know the old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me”? That is the biggest lie in the world. Bones can heal quickly, yet you can spend your entire life trying to get over one bad sentence someone said to you in middle school. In fact, studies have shown the entire universe is made up of sound. When God spoke, those words or sounds created everything. Have you ever heard this: “If these walls could speak”? Studies have shown that walls have memories and that sounds heard remain in those walls. The entire universe is a vibration being recorded.

I didn’t start playing drums until I was sixteen years old. Most drummers start playing when they’re two or three, so I was late. At seventeen, I loved all kinds of music but had an affinity for jazz fusion, and my favorite group was The Jeff Lorber Fusion. I went and saw them play at a hotel ballroom in Eugene, Oregon. I was bold and determined to meet the band. So, I went to the hotel lobby where they were staying and waited to meet them. They let me come to their soundcheck. Though I had only been playing a short time, I asked the drummer after the soundcheck if I could play, and he let me. When I was done, Danny Wilson, the bass player, said, “You’re going to be one of them superstar drummers.” That one sentence struck me like a bolt of lightning. I hadn’t heard many words of affirmation up to that point, and this one came from the bass player of my favorite group whom I respected and admired, so I believed what he said.

After graduating from high school in 1980, I moved to Los Angeles to pursue my dream of becoming a musician. Of course, I ran into all kinds of opposition and disappointments, but because of that one sentence from Danny Wilson, “You’re going to be one of them superstar drummers,” I didn’t quit. I kept hearing him say it over and over. I thought, if Danny Wilson felt that way about me, I can’t quit. That one sentence literally changed my life.

A few years later, I received my big break. I played for a group called the New Edition. They were like The Jackson Five of the ’80s and still popular today. That was my first big gig. Suddenly, I was a famous drummer in fan magazines and realized a bunch of younger drummers were now looking up to me. One twelve-year-old kid kept coming backstage at different concerts with his dad. He wanted to meet me and ask questions, so I just loved on him and encouraged him. I would pump him up saying, “Oh, man, can I take a picture with you?” just to make him feel good. Of course, I said, “You’re going to be a superstar drummer one day.”

Several years later, he did! His name is John Blackwell. He became the drummer for Prince. He was on the cover of *Modern Drummer*, like I was. He even wore a hat like I do. In his article, he said, “I wear a hat because my hero, Zoro, wears a hat.” He remembered me and gave me kudos. “I learned so much from Zoro,” he said. So, I had this

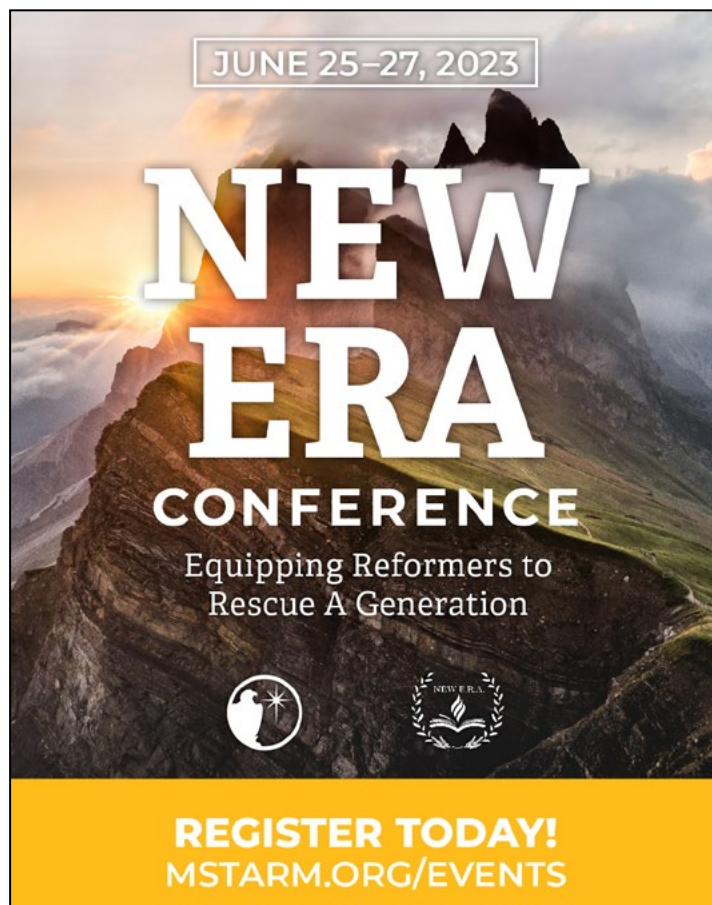
beautiful chance to pay it forward because I remembered what that one sentence did for me. Today, I've probably said that to a thousand drummers, and it doesn't matter if they all become famous. Sometimes drumming is just a hobby to keep them motivated and out of trouble until they find their real dream. I am forever mindful about speaking words of life to people because I remember how much that one sentence changed my life.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (see Proverbs 18:21 NASB). I can say with certainty the words I have decreed over myself and family have altered the course of my life, my marriage, and the lives of our children. Words have brought me to my present reality. Claude M. Bristol, author of *The Magic of Believing*, said, “It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen.” That is what God asks of all of us.

My mom raised me on Frank Sinatra's music. When I was twelve years old, she took me to a Frank Sinatra concert. I was mesmerized and have never been the same since. I didn't know I wanted to be a drummer then, but I wanted to be like Sinatra. Frank said, when he was a young man, and before he had made a name for himself, he was a nobody. He attended a Bing Crosby concert with his first wife, Nancy, turned to her, and said, “You know what? I'm going to be a professional singer someday. I'm going to be up there. Like I told you earlier, I'm going places.” He later told his father, “Well, you know, Dad, I've given it a lot of thought, I really want to pursue this singing thing. I believe I could be as good or better than Bing Crosby.” That's like an athlete saying they're going to be better than LeBron James. That's the power of words!

To be continued... 🎵

Known as the “Minister of Groove,” **ZORO** is an internationally-renowned rock star and one of the world's most respected and award-winning drummers. With his passion for teaching, inspiring, and guiding others to follow their own dreams, his star-studded musical career has catapulted him to a different stage as a motivational speaker, dynamic storyteller, and inspirational author. In 2009, Zoro established Zoro International Ministries (ZIM), a nonprofit organization that equips young adults with the tools needed to harness, develop, and share their gifts.





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The Power of Words (PART II)

BY ZORO THE DRUMMER

The following was adapted from Zoro's message at MorningStar's Vision Conference December 31, 2022, at 10:30 am.

It only takes a minute or seconds to change a life. People think they need to take a mission trip to Siberia to convert someone to the Lord. No, you just need to walk around knowing the power of your words to change the destinies of the people around you. It literally takes seconds. Some people are just one sentence away from suicide. One nasty comment on a plane or at a restaurant, one word from a mean or rude person, and they are seconds away from killing themselves. Likewise, we are all one sentence away from changing the world in a radical way. One encouraging word can cure cancer. All people need is someone to say something positive that will move them in a direction that changes everything.

Where might I be had Danny Wilson not said those words to me, "You're going to be one of them superstar drummers"? I might have quit when I failed all those auditions and people told me I wasn't good enough, but I kept reciting Danny's words. We all remember moments when someone spoke something to us—good and bad. I remember a teacher once told me, "You're a loudmouth, a loser, and you'll never amount to anything." We immediately hold on to those words and make them our identity. We need to choose our words wisely to encourage, heal, inspire, forgive, and affirm.

God always speaks to our potential, not to who we currently are. He speaks to who He made us to be and what He knows we can do. In Judges 6:12, when Gideon doubted his ability to defeat the Midianites, an angel appeared to him and said, "**The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!**" He said that when Gideon felt like a coward. Wherever we go, we have that same incredible ability to change atmospheres in people's lives. The angel did not speak to Gideon's cowardice but to what was inside him. Jesus also always spoke to people's

potential. Peter denied Him three times, yet He said, "**You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it**" (see **Matthew 16:18**). He spoke that to a traitor and coward knowing his potential.

When Jesus performed miracles, He also spoke them into existence. He said to the crippled man, "**Arise and walk**" (see **Matthew 9:5**). To a dead man, he said, "**Lazarus, come forth!**" (see **John 11:43**) He spoke to what He saw. That is why I wrote my book *Soar!: 9 Proven Keys For Unlocking Your Unlimited Potential* to help people understand that the kingdom of God, the

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greatest kingdom in the universe, resides in them. The kingdom is how we speak, walk, act, behave, believe, and stand in faith and power. The key and gateway to God's kingdom is in your mouth. Everything you say reflects what you believe and know. What's inside you comes out through words and changes atmospheres.

When my wife was pregnant with our firstborn, I recorded a ninety-minute cassette tape on my Sony Walkman. I said things like, "This your father. I can't wait to meet you. You're going to be a world changer. You are already loved. God has a plan for your life." I made decrees and recited Bible verses and poems I had written for my son. I also recorded music, because I wanted my child to appreciate music. I recorded James Brown, Earth, Wind & Fire, classical music, Frank Sinatra, and worship music. I had read all these studies that fetuses in the womb could receive messages because the brain was already developing before leaving the womb. Now I have a twenty-three-year-old son who is loving, kind, smart, and loves the Lord.

I thought, why wait till he's out of the womb? He should know before he comes into the world that he is welcomed and wanted. So, I made decrees and declarations over him. I told my wife, "Just humor me," while she watched her television show and let me put my headphones to her belly. I played it day after day. Now my son has finished college and wants to be the next Jay Sekulow and a world changer. It's already been prophesied five times he'll be a great statesman. *That's* the power of words.

I did the same for my daughter. I recorded messages saying, "You are a princess among women." To my wife, I say, "You're an incredible wife, and you bless me and our children." I have always tried to speak positive words to them. When my children were younger, my wife would make their school lunches, and I would write love notes and put them in their lunches. They were like fortune cookies from Dad: "You're going to have an encounter today." "You're going to be a blessing to someone today." "You're going to be a world changer." "God loves you." Sometimes I would quote Michelangelo, Thomas Edison, or some other famous person. I did this until they were twelve or thirteen and started getting embarrassed by the notes.

From the age of three or four I taught them to memorize

"If you're not the person you want to be, pray and ask God to help you become that person. What kind of words do you speak to yourself, your children, your spouse, your family, your friends, your coworkers, strangers? Do you speak words of life? Are you a good steward of your tongue and time? Most importantly, what's the tone of your voice? No matter how good your words are, if your tone is harsh, it won't sound good."

Bible verses. My son could memorize twenty verses in Exodus when he was four or five. Kids don't know what they can't do until you tell them. So, I never told them. He memorized every president when he was three or four. Children are capable of much more than we give them credit for. Having grown up without a father, I decided the curse would stop with me. I am the patriarch of a new generation, so I just loved them the way I wished someone had loved me. I wanted my sons and daughters to not only know the love of their father but to also pass that on to the next generation. We've all been cursed by our families in some way; may the buck stop with us. It ends here.

So, we must take inventory of our words, whether positive or negative. Like the classic Bing Crosby song says, "You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative, don't mess with Mr. In-Between." Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living," so let's take inventory and examine our words and behavior. Do people like what I say? Am I an asset or a liability? A deficit or a plus? Do I drain or fill people? Be honest. If you're not the person you want to be, pray and ask God to help you become that person. What kind of words do you speak to yourself, your children, your spouse, your family, your

friends, your coworkers, strangers? Do you speak words of life? Are you a good steward of your tongue and time? Most importantly, what's the tone of your voice? No matter how good your words are, if your tone is harsh, it won't sound good. Have you ever been misunderstood in an argument? It was probably because of your tone. Our tone determines how our words are perceived. Do some internal research, and the best people to ask are those closest to you.

Author Leo Buscaglia said, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around." Actor Jim Carrey once said, "I can live for two months on one good compliment." Everyone hungers for praise and affirmation. It is a basic human need. When people affirm me, it doesn't make me arrogant or puffed up; it makes me want to rise up, be better, and do more. It affirms my calling. It makes me a better steward of what God has given me to affect others. Never be afraid to compliment anyone.

Encouragement is like food and water. What I ate yesterday will not fill me today, because each day is filled with new battles and new reasons to be discouraged. If we had x-ray vision, we could see inside people's spirits and see what they're feeling. We would probably constantly hug people and say, "I'm sorry." But we can't always see inside, so our default should be a kind word, which is like a drop of water in the Mojave Desert. People get knocked down and discouraged every day, so you can never over-encourage people. Don't ever think, "Oh, they don't need to hear that. They already know that." People need encouragement like they need water, and we all have the privilege of being God's conduit of love!

To be continued... 🌈

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The Power of Words (Part III)

BY ZORO THE DRUMMER

The following was adapted from Zoro's message at MorningStar's Vision Conference December 31, 2022, at 10:30 am.

We cannot always heal everyone or provide everyone a job, or whatever they need, but we can always give a kind and encouraging word that can totally change people's lives. When I have gone through discouraging times, kind words did not always change my situation, but they did help me endure another day, week, or month until the next person came along and gave a morsel of goodness.

My mom once told me when I was born, she saw a bright light around my head like a halo. I always thought she just said that to make me feel good because I didn't have a dad. I often asked about my dad why he didn't love me or contact me, so I thought she made that up to comfort me—until she died. Then, I saw that same light!

For my first-grade school picture, I wanted to be different and be like her, so I asked her if I could wear her orange silk scarf. Maybe it was the rock and roller in me. Rock and rollers never want to conform or dress like other people. It's in our nature to be different because we're from the tribe of creatives. She said, "How can you wear my scarf? We live in the United States, not Mexico." But I finally convinced her, and she put it on me. Then she leaned down to my ear, and said, "One day, my brave son, you'll do something fantastical with your life."

When I was twelve years old, we moved from Compton in Los Angeles to a farming community in Oregon. I got a job working at a music store there. I was a hard worker for the woman who owned the store. I even polished and cleaned the spokes on her Jaguar. I was very ambitious. She said, "You know, one day you're going to make it big, kid, because I've never met anyone who works as hard as you. You've got a good heart, and I promise you, I've met thousands of kids running this music store, but you're

going to make it big." That was another sentence I have never forgotten. When I rented my trumpet from her, I told her, "One day I'm going to be a famous musician and come through town and play and remember you and get you front row tickets to my concert."

Twenty-five years later, I came through town, playing with Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, which was her favorite group. I said, "Today, I'm fulfilling my promise," and got her those front row tickets. I told Frankie all about her, and he made a special announcement at the concert and brought her backstage. He said to her, "Thank you so much for raising my drummer. He is one of the best in the country. Thank you for what you did for him in giving him his start."

Again, when someone receives an affirming word, it doesn't make them arrogant; it just makes them want to do good in return. I always honored that woman and made her a part of everything I did, because of her words. In my books, I have the longest list of acknowledgments ever, because I want to be sure to thank everyone who has been kind to me or been part of my journey. What's the point of being successful if we have no one to share it with? Who more important to share it with than the people who made those little deposits along the way, and who's to say which deposit was more valuable than the others? They all meant something.

When I was sixteen years old, I had my first professional drum teacher and mentor. Realizing my brother and I did not have an adult male figure in our lives, he took me under his wing. His family owned a beach house on the Oregon Coast, so one weekend he invited my brother and me to visit their beach house, while he played at nearby clubs with his rock and roll band. While at the beach house, he said, “Man, you’ve got a natural God-given talent. I can’t wait to see what’s going to happen in your life.” He has since followed my career. We have played together at times, and we’re still friends, but when he invited me to that beach house, it had a lasting impact on a broken, sixteen-year-old kid.

Then, alongside my musical career, I began traveling around the world doing ministry. When I toured with Frankie Valli or Lenny Kravitz, I would cold call churches and say, “Hi, my name is Zoro. I’m a Christian. I’m in town. Can I speak at your church?” I would literally look through the phonebook for churches in Vegas, Atlantic City, or wherever. Of course, most turned me down, but every now and then someone would take a chance on me. Then I’d get recommendation letters, so the next church didn’t think I was a kook. I remember speaking at a church at 7:00 pm, then racing to get to the 9:00 show at the MGM Grand in Vegas. In Italy, on our day off with Lenny Kravitz, everyone else would do the tourist thing, while I would speak at a church or school.

Ministry can be tough, but the toughest part is rejection. People did not like the way I dressed. I did not fit their mold. But there’s no dress code in heaven, and you can’t judge men’s hearts by their outward appearance. If you do, you’ll judge wrongly every time. The guy who dresses conservatively might be the pedophile that goes after your kid. The biker with the long hair and beard might be the guy saving your kid from the pedophile. I have experienced rejection my whole life. I have spoken at conferences where people have looked at me snootily or with disdain—until they realized I was the speaker. Some even came back later and apologized after they heard me speak or God convicted their hearts. *That’s* human nature.

I once visited evangelist Luis Palau in his Portland, Oregon office. He just said three words, “Don’t give up.” Sometimes, I have wanted to give up when people have

kept hurting me. I wanted to say, “Forget you guys.” But Luis Palau said, “Don’t give up.”

A Christian worship leader/songwriter friend once pitched me to a pastor he knew in Northern California. The pastor emailed him back saying, “The elders agreed unanimously they didn’t want him. They’re still joking about his hat and clothes. They said, ‘We can’t have a guy named “Zoro” come to our church!’” They never even looked me up on the Internet or heard me speak before they cast judgment. I was furious. I wanted to write those elders and tell them what I really thought. It was therapeutic writing it, but I never sent it. Instead, I just lifted the letter to God.

Six months later, I was asked to come on staff at another mega church in California, where the pastor is my friend. The first night I was officially on staff, he gave me two words, “Welcome home!” After the rejection letter, that felt incredible. Our job is to love people, not judge them. The grace of God has been given to us to give to others. We all want to be someone’s treasure, but mostly, don’t we all want to be God’s treasure?

Those elders said, “We don’t like his hat, his name, or his clothes. We don’t want him.” Then someone like Rick Joyner comes along who says, “Isn’t he a treasure?” When we die, those are the words we will remember—the people who touched us and the words they spoke. We won’t remember the money or the fame, just the words of the people who touched us and the people we touched. You have a chance to alter the destiny of other people based on the simple words you speak. If I can travel all over the world, just a simple man with a childlike faith, you can do it, too. Don’t worry about the opinions of others, because they won’t be there to judge you at the judgment. The only opinion we should care about or concern ourselves with is whether we are pleasing Him. 🙏

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