



## **Speak Love: Making Your Words Matter**

*Annie F. Downs*

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You've heard, 'Think before you speak' a hundred times, and probably shrugged it off just like that other insightful phrase, 'Your face will freeze like that if you're not careful.' But unlike a facial expression, our words do stick around. (Just think about middle school a sec. See?) Which means everything you say---from what tell your friends, whisper about your enemies, post online, mutter to yourself, or even say to the celebrity you ran into at the coffee shop---carries a whole lot of power. The question is, are you ready to use that power to make a real difference? Because the truth is, you could be part of the first generation who uses their words to build up and not tear down, and even kill the mean girl mentality. Through very funny stories, Scripture, and a real understanding of the good, bad, and ugly ways we can use our words, Annie Downs explores the difference you can make when you speak love to others, to God, and even to yourself. Because when you speak love, you speak life. And that's what matters.

## **Speak Love: Making Your Words Matter Details**

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Author : Annie F. Downs

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# From Reader Review Speak Love: Making Your Words Matter for online ebook

## Caitlin Theroux says

*Original review here: <http://jesusfreakhideout.com/books/SpeakLoveMakingYourWordsMatter.asp>*

Today's world is one of constant communication, and seldom can you find yourself in a state of absolute isolation. This incessant and never-ending saturation in ideas and conversation has many upsides, but it also has far too many downsides. Many teens in this day and age find themselves inundated with the influx; many more find themselves being bullied within it. In Annie F. Downs' book Speak Love, cyberbullying is just one of the many topics she covers. Her overall point is to speak words that give life wherever we go, and to avoid words that give death.

Speak Love starts out a bit slowly. Downs covers how communication with God is key before communication with others can reach a peak of love and constructive language. The entire first part of the book is dedicated to prayer, reading the Bible, connecting with God, and staying in relationship with Christ. Focusing so centrally on a relationship with God is applauded, for in today's culture, focusing far too much time on outside sources draws our eyes away from Him should we let it. (I speak from experience when I say that distraction is prevalent and easy to fall into.) Downs does a good job on getting to the core about why a relationship with God is so vitally important to one's own life.

The second part deals in the area of using our words to speak love (hence the title) and how when we are right with God, then things will iron out and we will begin to see where we are not speaking love. Downs handles real-life issues such as "Mean Girls," celebrities being people, cyber interactions, and our own words in such a way as to make the reader feel everything is conversational and never accusatory. Her tone never comes off as snobbish or as if she's speaking down to us. That in itself I appreciate. However, I found myself wandering over asides that only muddled the flow of her writing. Once she gets going, Downs has a nasty habit of throwing in side comments and unneeded information that chops up the smoothness in her writing. I understand the "conversational" aspect; I disagree with the need for "conversational" to muddy up its own waters by way of too much conversation.

Throughout the entire book, Downs puts in Scripture that emphasizes her point and reveals the absolute Biblical need for words of love and life. I find no fault with this. In fact, I think that in terms of this being categorized as a "Religion & Spirituality" book, the Scripture that Downs puts in stays relevant to everything she's saying; unfortunately, not all "inspirational" books do the same, driving irksome prickles under my skin every time I see it done. Downs gave me no prickles. The only thing I would recommend for next time is that she keep her translations to a minimum. The NIV served her absolutely fine in most cases, and every time she threw in the parallel verse from The Message, the only thing it did was muddle up the flow of her manuscript.

Let me continue in this vein. Near the end of the book, Downs started to become a tad repetitive in her points and what she was saying. While the encouragement to young women across every spectrum was great, the third part of the book drew far too heavily on parts one and two. A short conclusion would have sufficed in wrapping up her points and bringing them about to a tight close. Instead, Downs meanders back and forth with things we've heard already-and probably three or four times, to boot. Should a second edition be released, I would suggest revisions to tighten flow and cut massive repetition.

Downs' message in Speak Love is a well-needed one that is being broadcast, if you will, from every corner in the fields of encouragement. Teen girls will find her conversational tone warm and inviting, and no doubt they will take away everything they needed to hear when the last page of the book turns. With minor adjustments and some heavy editing for future editions, Downs' book will come into its own as a powerhouse of encouragement to whomever reads it.

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### **Taylor says**

I, like other readers, am not in the intended demographic for this book, but I still found this book relevant and I wish I would have had it when I was a teenager. I loved the journal prompts at the end of each chapter-they were challenging and made me stop and think about what I'd read. I didn't do many of the responses in Part 2, though, because they weren't really applicable to me. The only thing I didn't like was how the scripture was organized in at the end of each chapter. Since I was using an actual Bible to read it, it would have been more beneficial for it to be in order by book instead of how it came up in the chapter. That may just be me though, I'm sure many people use an app or website to find the scripture instead.

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### **Dan Istvanik says**

From: <http://jrhighthug.blogspot.com/2013....>

WORDS... So powerful, so life-giving, so very important to the heart and life of young girls In a world saturated in words, communication and messages there still not enough girls "speaking love" and being "spoken love" to- that is why I was so excited when I finally had a chance to read the book, Speak Love.

The Speak Love book and devotional journal by Annie F. Downs is a great resource for those of us involved in the lives of teenage girls, helping them to understand the importance of communication to God, others, and themselves. Not just another positive affirmation book or quick self-help book about love yourself more, Annie F. Downs, writes a book that is scripture-centered and real.

While the title would at first seem to just address the spoken, it actually thoroughly and systematically address all the various ways girls communicate. Starting off with four very strong chapters on our communication with God. I absolutely love these first four chapters, after recently finishing a series in my own group about prayer. I am continued to be amazed at how many students really do not fully understand how God is and how to communicate with him.

The second set of chapters and the core of the book is speaking love to "others", including chapter 9 addressing communication to celebrities. The fact that is included, in my opinion, is brilliant. It is so needed and so overlooked in so many resources and books written to young women. Especially for someone working with 6th-8th grader girls, this is HUGE! Whether we as, adults completely 'get-it' or remember, our students have access to celebrities through social media and it affects them! The other chapter that is even more important that I absolutely appreciated was the next chapter about talking about God to others.

The wraps up with two final chapters, that are oh, so very important about speaking love to yourself. Once again not a cheesy positive affirmation approach, Ms. Downs, just soaks her final words in Biblical, scripture

advice and love.

Now for the Speak Love Revolution: 30 Day Devotional... As if the book itself was not enough, which it absolutely is. The companion devotional journal is the double extra awesome layer on top. Each of the 30 days worth of devotional readings are again on the mark. Bound is a very attractive purple cover, it makes the perfect take-along to school or wherever a girl might be going.

These two books are truly inspirational books for the girls in your ministry, that could transform the way they communicate to God, others, and even themselves. The perfect gifts for Christmas or as a girl's study to start off the New Year!

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### **Mackenzie says**

I really enjoyed this book after Jessi Connolly gave an Influence Network class on speaking life which provided me an excellent foundation for me to explore the topic more, especially with this book. Speak Love is definitely targeted for middle school or high school girls, which I didn't know. I was looking for something to go a little bit deeper than this book did, but it touched on some great points. I loved the Scripture that Downs used throughout every chapter and will definitely go back to those verses. This book would be great for a middle school or high school aged small group. This book didn't meet my expectations of what I thought it would be, but is an incredible book with a life-changing purpose.

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### **Sarah says**

Speak Love is a practical yet engaging guide for girls and young women who seek to use their words for building up and encouraging others. While the book is geared mainly toward readers in middle and high school, it's a valuable source for anyone looking for ways to share love, adjust attitudes, and perhaps mentor a younger friend from a Christian perspective. I know I would have benefited loads from reading Speak Love as a teen, but I also just love reading anything by Annie Downs because she's been an inspiration to me as a writer. Her writing style invites you into the pages as if you were sitting down in person and having a conversation, sharing stories from your lives, and having a heart-to-heart about how our words affect not only people around us but also ourselves and our self-esteem. Annie Downs offers godly, scriptural wisdom, as well as humor, and she delivers the truth with exhortation and conviction.

Aside from the content itself, something I greatly appreciate about this book is its format. There are twelve chapters divided among three parts. These sections makes it a neat, short book that one could easily read within a month or two-- I only took a year because I let myself get distracted by life and other books, yet this proves another asset of the format: it allows a reader to set down the book for a spell and then return to it months later with ease. At the end of each chapter is a sort of activity section, which reviews the main Bible memory verse from the chapter ("Memorize the Word") and lists additional scripture references ("Read the Word"), journal prompts ("Journal Your Words"), and ways to put words into action ("Use Your Words"). At the end of the book is one of the most enjoyable appendices I've ever found, complete with additional book titles, websites, and even recipes.

I got this book knowing I wasn't within the target audience, so while I didn't feel as personally invested in

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some of the points as I would have been as a teen, I still read with the hope of passing along such wisdom to other young people in my present or future life. And besides, we can all use the reminder to speak love to others, and that loving words come from loving thoughts, the source of which is our loving God.

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### **Laura Odom says**

This book is written to teen girls, so I was willing to overlook phrases the author uses to connect like "totes adorbs", etc. I thought it was a great book, and I'm already planning to go out and buy two additional copies -- one for my daughter, and one for her small group leader. Not only did it speak truth, it was full of discussion points, action plans, & journal prompts. The only thing I didn't really appreciate was the whole "pray Jesus into your heart" chapter, which I disagree with doctrinally, but I felt the rest of it was spot on. It not only covered "mean girls" and bullying, but how we speak to our parents, our siblings, boys, etc. I wholeheartedly recommend it for the teen/tween girls in your life - if not to read themselves, for you to read and discuss with them.

Would I recommend this to my BFF? Yes.

Would I recommend this to my teen daughter? Even more so.

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### **Alice says**

Very good discussion at the middle school level about how important our words are to our own self-esteem, our relationships with others and our relationship with God. Annie is humble and tells us how she struggles with certain issues; how she overcame some of them; and how we can improve in these areas, too. Funny in places, humbling in others. A true treasure and a must for ministry to pre- and teens. Lots of helpful info and exercises to make solidify the concrete, making the lessons stick! Highly recommend this book!

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### **Rachael Mathis says**

I read through this book with about 10 girls I teach at my church. I loved it. They loved her writing style and sense of humor, but it was also full of truths we all need to hear. I highly recommend for teenage girls.

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### **Hailey says**

I just finished reading this book with my High School Girls' Life Group. I started this group for High School Girls back in February of 2016. We met once a week (usually) and discussed the book chapter-by-chapter.

While this is written from a Christian perspective, it holds truth and encouragement for all young women, from middle school to post-college. I loved the topics in the book. I loved Annie's writing style. She writes as if you are sitting down at Starbucks's enjoying a mocha together.

Annie offers practical advise on guys, friendships, social media, self-confidence, and even family matters. She is honest, and never comes across in a condescending tone in any of the advise she gives. I know all of the girls in my life group enjoyed the book. I gave each girl a journal and ask that she write about her experiences, as well as her thoughts on the books. All of the girls had positive remarks on the book. The discussion questions and journal prompts make this a perfect read for any small group or book club setting.

We loved the discussions that came from Annie's writings. In fact, we loved them so much that we are going to start reading Annie's book Perfectly Unique this fall.

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### **Jim says**

I love this book for high school and college women and for the rest of us who know that words matter - both the words we say and how we respond to the words people say to us.

Each chapter has scripture well used and explained. It has end of the chapter things you can do as well as stuff to look up online and in the Bible.

Downs writes in a great manner for people that respects who they are without talking down. She covers families, boyfriends, friends, mean girls, online, how we talk to ourselves and a lot more.

Downs uses stories well from other people, her past, and her present life. A real nice mixture of examples.

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### **Kristen says**

I loved this book!!! I read this to my 10 and 12 year old daughters. They loved this book! Miss Downs brings out the importance of our words when it comes to God, family, friends, mean girls and even celebrities. She also brings out the need to speak truth to ourselves, and to watch out for the lies we tend to believe. She has scripture to make her points and ideas on how to live out what she shares in each chapter. She is funny and real, sharing her own struggles with the reader. I'm an adult and found great encouragement and challenge by what was said. I'm going to ask my girls to read this more than once. A reminder of the power of our words is one I think most people forget. You are speaking life or death with everything you say.

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### **Laura Pratt says**

I am going to be honest- I pre-ordered this book because of the awesome pre-order swag that came with that. (Sorry) BUT then I got an idea for having a teenage girls class at my church. (I am currently still pondering how to go about this) and put out a call to my Dream Team sisters about books to use or read to get ideas for this class and someone again mentioned this book. So I went on Netgalley because waiting another whole month just wasn't going to work for me when I needed to work on this idea NOW. And it was available for review. I requested it, downloaded it, and read it. Half way through this book I emailed the author (which I would normally only do with Holley, Kayse, and TeriLynne) and sang her praises. And found out that she went to one of my high school's rival schools, grew up in the next town over from where I grew up, and is

only a year older than me so it is completely plausible that I have probably met her at some point in our growing up years or at least seen her. By now you are probably wanting me to stop rambling and tell you what this book is right?

This book is Speak Love: Making Your Words Matter by Annie F. Downs.

This book is about using your words to build each other up and not to tear each other down. This book reminds you that your power is in your words. This book is about loving yourself and also loving others. This book was not written for the target audience AT ALL. This book was written for EVERYONE. (Hey, I told Annie this [sorry- but too many close connections you are now Annie and we are friends- from one email but hey go with me on this] in the email I sent her. She is pretty awesome.)

I thought that I was going to read this book and just get ideas for class topics from it. But I don't think that will work. The brilliance of this book is that it is a perfect class book. It has memory verses, discussion questions, and homework/journaling built in. I am going to use it for my proposal for this class.

I will say that while this book is awesomely amazing- she leaves out some important stuff. When she talks about becoming a Christian she only mentions asking Jesus into your heart. There isn't really any mention of repenting or baptism. And guys that is important. Both of those things are commanded of us. Jesus says repent AND be baptized. So while yes, you need to ask Jesus into your heart and keep him there, you also need to ask for forgiveness and be baptized like he commanded of you. Thus reveals I problem that I have with most of my favorite writers these days but I digress.

So this is the part where I say go buy the book- GO BUY THE BOOK- but I am also going to say this; if you have a teenage girl (I would say boy because so much applies to them but it was directed at girls) this would be a great gift for them. I would even venture to say a girl who is in the fifth grade up. OR if you are in charge of a small group at your church for teenagers or for grown women (yes, we need it too) it would be a great book for your next study. The pre-order swag is probably all gone as this book comes out on August 20 but you can still try here or if it's after the 20th then the book is still worth the cost. You can buy the book at all major retailers.

\*\* I was provided with a copy of this book via Netgalley in exchange for my review. All opinions are my own.\*\*

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### **Tinyde says**

This is my first read from Annie F. Downs. And I have to say that I am very impressed. I have been bought up Christian so the 'think before you speak phases' comes and goes. But reading Speak Love has helped me to dig deeper into my roots and think am I really speaking love to everyone around me. And sometimes it hurts...Speak Love is a wider eye opener to what it really means to speak love. And no it's not like those 'documentary type' Christian book about the do's and don'ts. ITs engaging, and I LOVE how Annie has included humour. \*pat your self on the back Annie..:)\* The humour really does the book for me. If you are new to begin a Christian or are wanting to grow deeper for your love for God, this could just be the book for you.

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### **Jules Q says**

I began reading Annie Downs's blog just before this book was released so I had a lot of intro to it before actually purchasing it. And after Ms. Downs wrote a beautiful post about speaking words of encouragement and love over Miley Cyrus (after her infamous VMA performance), I knew she was onto something big.  
<http://www.annieblogs.com/2013/08/26/...>

There are too many mean voices in this world, and too many are women speaking hate over other women. SPEAK LOVE is a call to action for all of us: to love ourselves enough to see our own beauty, to love each other enough to end bullying, and to love the Mean Girl so much that the cycle is finally broken.

This is a plain-spoken book by a young, fresh, honest author whose vivacious voice just might start a revolution. SPEAK LOVE is a must-read for every teen girl and every young woman and every mother of a daughter. It's also a book for anyone who wants to see a change in the hurtful speech of this day. I highly recommend!

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### **Meleah says**

Although I am not a part of the demographic that this book was intended for (Teenaged girl) I still got a lot out of it. Some messages such as speaking love transcend age and gender.

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