

Taming the Tongue

Scriptural References

"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" – James 3:8

"Let the words of my mouth....be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord"

Psalm 19:14

I. INTRODUCTION

The tongue is the most difficult member of the body to control, and it has the potential for causing the most harm. The way you use your tongue is a good indication of your *relationship with God*. The tongue speaks whatever is in the heart, *"for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* (Matthew 12 :34). *"Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man (Matthew 15:18). "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."* (James 3:2).

James compares the tongue to a bit in a horse's mouth which controls the movements of the horse, to a helm which controls a large ship, and to a small fire that can cause great trouble. The tongue can defile the whole body. Only the power of God can tame it (James 3:1-13).

James makes it clear that it is easy for us to sin with the tongue, that the tongue is very dangerous, and that sinning with the tongue can completely destroy our holiness.

II. WAYS WE CAN SIN WITH THE TONGUE

A. Talebearing and Gossip

This is one of the most vicious sins. It is Satan's primary tool for destroying the church from within. It can:

- destroy confidence in people
- harm the innocent
- hinder the repentant
- split churches
- discourage saints
- disillusion new converts

The Bible teaches us to speak evil of no man, especially our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Most of us readily acknowledge the evils of gossip, but the problem comes in identifying it in their own lives. Many Christians have difficulty in the areas of talebearing and gossip. What exactly is talebearing and gossip?

- Telling things of a personal, intimate, or sensational nature. This includes – spreading rumors that could damage someone; and it includes backbiting, which means telling scandalous things about someone.

Gossip not only includes lying about someone or spreading unverified rumors about someone, but it even includes telling facts of a personal nature that the gossiper has **no business** revealing.

*** Telling a **fact** can be talebearing when it is told as **gossip** to one who **does not** need to know about it.

QUESTION: *"If you hear that another sister or brother in the church has something against you, or has been indiscreet in some areas, what should you do?"*

ANSWER: First, love thinks of evil, so you should disbelieve the rumor. Forget about it. If after praying you cannot forget it, then go to the person involved, get the story straight **from them**, and clear it up (Matthew 18:15).

B. Sowing Discord

Sowing discord is one of seven things that are listed as abomination. An abomination is something God hates, and it will keep you **OUT OF HEAVEN** (Revelation 21:8). Sowing discord involves going from person to person causing dislike, distrust, and division by telling confidential things or by constant criticism. The person who sows discord by words is one who thinks he can tell all kinds of things anywhere, anytime, to anyone. These people repeat things they heard in confidence and obtained through friendship. They are not afraid to criticize **ANYONE**. Examine yourself in this area. Do you enjoy gossiping about people? Do you enjoy hearing something bad about someone? Do you enjoy telling everything you know? Do you enjoy criticizing or blaming others? Do you stir up trouble, dissension, and strife. If so, you need to be careful and need deliverance in this area.

C. Slang

All of us need to be careful about using slang expressions. Many slang words have bad connotations, and we pick them up without realizing what they really mean. What about watered down versions of profanity (curse words)? If we do not want to use certain words, why use their derivatives and substitutes.

D. Filthy Communication

Colossians 3:8 tells us to *"Put off...filthy communication out of your mouth."* Ephesians 4:29 tells us to *"let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."*

We are temples of the Holy Ghost. Dirty jokes, dirty words, and dirty actions cannot be allowed to come from us. Words that are suggestive of something indecent should not come from the lips of a Christian.

E. Reviling

"Nor revilers...shall inherit the kingdom of God."

To revile means to abuse using words. It can mean to scold or to use harsh, rude, or abusive language.

Once again, we are temples of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, we must be careful not to follow our fleshly emotions.

F. Lying and Bearing False Witness

"Thy shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." (Exodus 20:16; Mark 10:19).

"All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." (Revelation 21:8).

In the above scriptures and many other scriptures, God shows how much He hates lies.

Two of the seven things listed as abominations, or things God hates, in Proverbs 6:16-19 are a **lying tongue and a false witness that speaks lies**. God wants us to keep our promises even if they hurt us.

A lie means to *"make a statement **knowing** that it is false, especially with the intent to deceive."* It can include **deliberately giving a false impression or confusing the issue in order to evade the truth**. We can even lie in certain situations by withholding information which is vital for the hearer to **correctly** understand the situation. We can lie by our **actions** as well as our words if we *deliberately* deceive, mislead, or create a false impression. It does not matter how *"small"* a lie is, it does not matter to whom the lie is told, and it does not matter for what purpose the lie is told, **A LIE IS A LIE**.

Also, it is possible to *"make a lie"* by actions. What if you show a false graduation certificate as if it were your own. You are defrauding and lying by giving a false impression.

As Christians we do not have to lie. No matter what the situation is, we can trust God to help us and protect us in difficult situations. The old saying is definitely true – **Honesty is the best policy**.

III. LACK OF DISCIPLINE, SELF-CONTROL AND CONCERN

When we are not able to control our tongue it is a sign we lack discipline, self-control, and a lack of concern for the feelings and opinions of others. It also shows a failure to acknowledge the accountability that a woman must bear when she speaks. James 1:19 tells us – *"Be swift to hear, slow to speak."*

IV. A DAMAGING SWORD

In Psalm 64:3 the tongue is called "A sword." This sword has certainly damaged, bruised, wounded, and killed more people than all the swords in all the wars since history began.

We are responsible for the words that we speak. Our own words snare us. We are ensnared by vows and promises spoken, but not kept by reckless criticisms and rash judgments.

How often do we sing the song *"What a friend we have in Jesus... oh what needless pain we bear?"* Someone should write a verse about what needless pain we **cause** when we *lacerate* people, wound them, and bruise them with our tongue.

V. SHOWCASE OF THE HEART

Our words reflect what is in our hearts. If a woman loves to cook, shop, sew, etc., she will talk about it. If she loves money, she will talk about money.

You can't cover up your heart. If there is bitterness in your heart, it will come through **what** we say and **how** we say it. If there is hatred, hatred will come. If there is anger, anger will come. No wonder James says that the tongue can't be controlled. The heart is engineering all that the tongue is going to say.

The heart is the factory that produces all these vile things, and the tongue is the showcase of the heart. One of the most amazing things about the transforming grace of God is that man loses his filthy language, lying tongue, and unholy anger when he gets saved.

If Christ were speaking inside of us all the time, we wouldn't come out with the rubbish that we utter so often.

VI. TAMING THE TONGUE

Like the rest of our body parts, we don't always use our tongues for what God designed them to do.

Some old sayings are not true:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." – **FALSE**

Think about this:

Most of us go to church almost every time the church doors are open, we wouldn't even harm a flea, we pay the IRS every dime it demands - But, we wound the ones we love with sarcasm, ridicule, gossip, evil suggestions, and praise for evil deeds.

Answer these personal questions:

- Do your words more often help than hurt?
- Do words reveal your true self or do they conceal you from others?
- Do your words hide God, or do they praise Him?
- Do you say the same words when someone is present as when they are absent?
- Are you more likely to use your tongue as a weapon of your flesh, or employ it as an instrument of the Spirit?

VII. FEW PEOPLE MASTER THE TONGUE

Virtually every woman says something at one time or another for which she is sorry shortly after she says it. Whether it is an expression made in anger or simply an idle comment made with no forethought, we have the tendency in our flesh to use our tongue in regrettable ways on occasion. Even when we offer an apology in sincerity, this cannot remove the memory of the hurtful remarks people sometimes make.

As Christian women we can be deceived into thinking that in our honesty we are free to say whatever we think and feel about a subject regardless of how it may affect, influence, or hurt others. Choosing to be silent at times **does not** mean you are a hypocrite or a coward. It shows you are wise and that you exhibit self-control. These are qualities that are praised in the scriptures.

A woman who does not control her tongue is undisciplined and out of control. *She does not know what to say, what she believes, or where she is going.* If a woman can control her tongue she is a potential guiding light and helping hand to others.

VIII. POWER TO DELIGHT

The tongue, for all of its potential for evil and harm, can also do some wonderful things. We can refresh and delight the weariest of souls by carefully choosing and speaking uplifting words.

When a Christian woman uses her tongue to edify others, she has the capacity to refresh and bring rest to the weary. What a blessing she can be when she reaches out to others.

With our tongue and God's wisdom, we can refresh and bless people.

IX. BLESSINGS FROM A TAMED TONGUE

While there are many abusers and evils brought forth by a tongue out of control, there are many blessings of a tongue that is **disciplined, wholesome, and tamed**. While it is true that no man can tame the tongue, the Lord can certainly tame it – **that is, if we allow him to do so**. **THE TAMED TONGUE IS A WITNESS!**

The tongue can bring **cheer, consolation, encouragement, hope, love, and blessing**. A gracious tongue is a beautiful thing.

Also, the tongue can be filled with praise to God in word and song. We are told in scripture to let the praise of God be continually in our mouths (Psalm 34:1). In Psalm 98:1, we are told to sing unto the Lord a new song.

In James 3:2, we are told that when we get control of the tongue we have virtually gotten control of everything and have come to maturity.

V. CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, we must turn to God; for only He can help us control our tongues – *"Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord."*

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A CLEAN TONGUE

Here are some qualities of a clean tongue:

- **A clean tongue exercises profitable silence.**
- **"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak"**
(James 1:19).
- **A clean tongue keeps quiet when necessary.**
- **A clean tongue does not gossip.**
- **A clean tongue is addicted to witnessing. It is always ready to speak for Christ anywhere and in any situation.**
- **A clean tongue is appreciative.**
- **A clean tongue will speak clean words and reverence God.**
- **A clean tongue must be kind.**
- **A clean tongue must promote peace and not unrest.**
- **A clean tongue must be truthful.**
- **A clean tongue does not grumble or complain.**
- **A clean tongue is positive.**

***Remember, one day you will answer to God for
every word you say. . .***

The Bible mentions many kinds of tongues

- ◆ **A flattering tongue (Psalm 5:9)**
- ◆ **A proud tongue (Psalm 12:3; 73:9)**
- ◆ **A lying tongue (Psalm 102:2; Proverbs 6:17)**
- ◆ **A deceitful tongue (Psalm 120:2)**
- ◆ **A perverted tongue (Proverbs 10:31; 17:20)**
- ◆ **A soothing tongue (Proverbs 15:4)**
- ◆ **A healing tongue (Proverbs 12:18)**
- ◆ **A destructive tongue (Proverbs 17:4)**
- ◆ **A mischievous and wicked tongue (Psalm 10:7)**
- ◆ **A soft tongue (Proverbs 25:15)**
- ◆ **A backbiting tongue (Proverbs 25:23)**