

## **Does Your Tongue Need Taming?**

By Stuart Pattico

This short article is about the tongue. Let us look at the below sobering verses about the human tongue:

6The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

(James 3:6-8. NIV)

21 The tongue has the power of life and death,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

(Proverbs 18:21, NIV)

36But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

(Matthew 12:36-37, NIV)

The last verse is particularly telling. Jesus says that the words we say will determine our eternal destiny – heaven or hell! Clearly, how we use our mouths is very important. If then we wish to avoid condemnation, we should pay careful attention to how God says we are not to use our tongues.

Below is a list, with biblical references, of things we should not do with our mouths:

### **13 Deadly Sins of the Tongue**

#### **1. Talking too much**

19 When words are many, sin is not absent,  
but he who holds his tongue is wise.

(Proverbs 10:19, NIV)

...avoid a man who talks too much

(Proverbs 20:19b)

#### **2. Talking Foolishness**

14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,  
But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

(Proverbs 15:14)

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man,  
When you do not perceive *in him* the lips of knowledge.

(Proverbs 14:7)

#### **3. Not thinking before you speak**

20 Do you see a man hasty in his words?  
*There is* more hope for a fool than for him.

(Proverbs 29:20)

#### 4. Gossiping

Gossip is conversation about the personal details of other people's lives, whether rumour or fact. It also includes spreading news about people and social incidents.

16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people...I *am* the LORD.  
(Leviticus 19:16, NKJV)

13 A talebearer reveals secrets,  
But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.  
(Proverbs 11:13)

20 Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out;  
And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.  
(Proverbs 26:20)

22 The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles,  
And they go down into the inmost body.  
(Proverbs 26:22)

#### 5. Slandering

Slander is saying something false or malicious that damages somebody's reputation

The hypocrite with *his* mouth destroys his neighbor  
(Proverbs 11:9)

27 An ungodly man digs up evil,  
And *it is* on his lips like a burning fire.  
(Proverbs 16:27)

#### 6. Backbiting

Backbiting is making spiteful or slanderous comments about somebody who is not present (i.e. behind their back!)

5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,  
Him I will destroy  
(Psalm 101:5)

#### 7. Speaking Perversely

Perverseness is that which is directed away from what is right or good. Perverse words include anything that is not holy: e.g. swearing, indecent jokes (often of a sexual nature).

31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,  
but a perverse tongue will be cut out.

32 The lips of the righteous know what is fitting,  
but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse

(Proverbs 10:31-32, NIV)

## 8. Lying

Please note, lying includes 'white lies' and exaggeration! Lying is the expression of deceit.

22 Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD,  
But those who deal truthfully *are* His delight.  
(Proverbs 12:22)

A false witness will not go unpunished,  
And *he who* speaks lies shall perish.  
(Proverbs 19:9)

## 9. Speaking violent words

violence covers the mouth of the wicked.  
(Proverbs 10:11)

6 The words of the wicked *are*, "Lie in wait for blood,"  
But the mouth of the upright will deliver them.  
(Proverbs 12:6)

22 Do not say, "I will recompense evil";  
Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.  
(Proverbs 20:22)

## 10. Boasting

3 In the mouth of a fool *is* a rod of pride  
(Proverbs 14:3)

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will<sup>[a]</sup> go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.  
(James 4:13-16)

Our speech should portray the fact that our lives are submitted to God's will. This is not fatalism; rather we should actively seek God's will in everything we do.

23 Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,<sup>[a]</sup> and follow Me.  
(Luke 9:23)

## 11. Speaking harsh words

By this, it is meant words that are designed to hurt someone.

18 There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword,  
But the tongue of the wise *promotes* health.  
(Proverbs 12:18)

1 A soft answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger.  
(Proverbs 15:1)

20 Whoever curses his father or his mother,  
His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.  
(Proverbs 20:20)

## 12. Flattery

To flatter someone is to complement unduly, and to over praise especially for gain or advantage.

1 Help, LORD, for the godly are no more;  
the faithful have vanished from among men.

2 Everyone lies to his neighbor;  
their flattering lips speak with deception.

3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips  
and every boastful tongue

(Psalm 12:1-3. NIV)

## 13. Grumbling and complaining

10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.  
(1 Corinthians 10:10, NIV)

So far, we have looked at what we should not do with our tongues. Before we look at how God wants us to use our tongues, we first need to deal with the root cause of the improper use of our tongues. Jesus revealed that the root cause of bad words is the condition of our hearts.

34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.  
(Matthew 12:34, NIV)

When the heart is filled, it overflows through the mouth, and that overflow tells us the real condition of the heart. Therefore, if our words are bad, our hearts are bad also. We therefore need to receive God's supernatural operation in our hearts, for we cannot heal our own hearts:

9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean,  
I am pure from my sin"?  
(Proverbs 20:9)

Now, here are 10 ways in which God expects us to use our tongues.

## **10 Ways to Use Your Tongue**

### **1. Our words should be few – we have two nostrils, two eyes, and two ears, but only one mouth!**

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;  
Keep watch over the door of my lips.  
(Psalm 141:3)

19 So then,<sup>[a]</sup> my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;  
James 1:19

27 He who has knowledge spares his words  
(Proverbs 17:27)

### **2. Our words should be self-controlled**

11 A fool gives full vent to his anger,  
but a wise man keeps himself under control.  
(Proverbs 29:11 NIV)

### **3. Our words should be full of life**

E.g. If someone asks you do something, instead of saying “I suppose I’ll have to”, say, “I’d be glad to!”

11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life  
(Proverbs 10:11, NIV)

6 *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.  
(Colossians 4:6)

### **4. Our words should be well informed**

13 He who answers a matter before he hears *it*,  
It *is* folly and shame to him.  
(Proverbs 18:13)

28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,  
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.  
(Proverbs 15:28)

### **5. Our words should be true**

6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend,  
But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.  
(Proverbs 27:6)

**6. Our words should be humble**

2 Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth;  
A stranger, and not your own lips.  
(Proverbs 27:2)

**7. Our words should be pure**

24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth,  
And put perverse lips far from you.  
(Proverbs 4:24)

**8. Our words should be edifying, not destructive.**

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.  
(Ephesians 4:29)

Never speak to put someone down, only speak to build him or her up.

**9. Our words should be Spirit-led**

1 The preparations of the heart *belong* to man,  
But the answer of the tongue *is* from the LORD.  
(Proverbs 16:1)

**10. Know The Ultimate Reason For Having A Tongue – Our Words Should Glorify God**

18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly;  
I will praise You among many people...  
28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness  
And of Your praise all the day long.

(Psalm 35:18,28)

Use your mouth to glorify, praise and thank God, and to tell other people about Him!