

Taming the Tongue

Preview

Life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21), but what are we speaking? How can we get control over our tongue—the most unruly member of our body? How can we intentionally use our words to speak life into people with whom we interact?

Praise

We give glory to God, whose Word will never fail! Situations change. Politics change. People change. But the Word of God is forever settled in Heaven (Psalm 119:89). The Word of God guides our decision-making and informs our actions. It lifts us up to a new, higher standard and place of living. The Word of God directs us from death to life. It lets us see ourselves clearly so we can become more like Jesus. We are thankful for the life-giving Word of God!

Parable

Have you ever said something you immediately regretted? When you're upset, it's so easy to get caught up in the moment and say something you don't really mean. Yet it doesn't always have to be when you're upset that you say the wrong things. Have you ever tried to compliment someone, but it came out the wrong way? Have you ever been trying to say the right thing, but the wrong thing came out? (If someone has a funny story to share about this, let them share it.) Even with the best intentions, our tongue can get us in trouble.

Present

If you struggle with what you say, you've got plenty of company. It's such a big issue that the Bible specifically mentions it several times. James especially had a few strong words to say about the tongue:

"If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless" (James 1:26, NLT).

"But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8, NKJV).

This is what we call a big issue. If we don't get control of our tongue, our religious efforts are worthless. Yet James indicates that no one can tame the tongue. So, what are we supposed to do?

Jesus gave us the answer in Luke 6:45 when He said, "Out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks." Our untamed tongue, therefore, is a heart issue. While we cannot solve that issue, Jesus can! As we repent, get baptized in Jesus' name, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, our heart changes. When we make sure we are filled with the things of God, the right things will start coming out of our mouth. This is not a one-time experience, however. Just like a car needs to refuel, so does your heart. Take intentional time out of your day to connect with God in prayer and reading the Bible so that when the opportunity arises, you will have the right things in your heart. If you want to be able to speak life to others, you must first make sure you have life inside of you!

The Bible gives us some specific directions on how to tame our tongue: we should be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry" (James 1:19, NLT). Too often we're the opposite of this verse: slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to get angry. Does that describe a lot of people you see in person and online? Yet Jesus calls you to a different standard. You should listen closely and diligently try not to jump to conclusions and become angry. Try to understand where others are coming from, even when they say things the wrong way. Then only after you've thought about how to respond, should you begin to speak. Don't let your mouth outrun your brain! Always take a moment to consider how to respond with grace so the love of Jesus can be shown.

Finally, we've got to control our environment. It's not enough just to put good things into our heart; we must intentionally keep the bad things out. For instance, it's great if you ate some broccoli for dinner, but if you followed it up with an entire gallon of ice cream, that broccoli might not

do you much good. Anytime you take a moment to pray and connect with God is time well-spent. Yet if you spend the rest of your day “consuming” inappropriate music and media, you may be surprised what finds its way into your heart. We all have hobbies and activities we enjoy, but we all must make sure those hobbies aren’t contrary to the Word of God. If we want to speak life to others in public, we can’t be putting evil before our eyes and heart in private

(Psalm 101:3).

Practice

- Think about the media you consume and the people you surround yourself with. Are they creating an environment for you to be successful? Are they focusing on the positive or the negative? Is the language of your friends and the media you consume godly or perverse? Are you in an environment that allows your heart to be filled with the things of God?
- Write down what you could change about your devotion to God and your environment (friends, media, etc.) to keep your heart full of the things of God.

Pray

Thank You for filling us with Your Spirit so we can have control over the things we say. We pray that our words will be used to lift others up and bring life to the people and situations we face. We ask that You help us to fill our hearts with the right things and give us the wisdom to know when something is becoming a weight in our lives. Help us to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger so we can represent You wherever we go.

Plus

- Make a habit of saying positive things (online and in person). Start each day with the goal of saying something uplifting to someone else. Use your words to bring encouragement, joy, and life to others.