

The Tool in Everyone's Mouth

LIFE FAITH FUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

SCRIPTURE STUDY

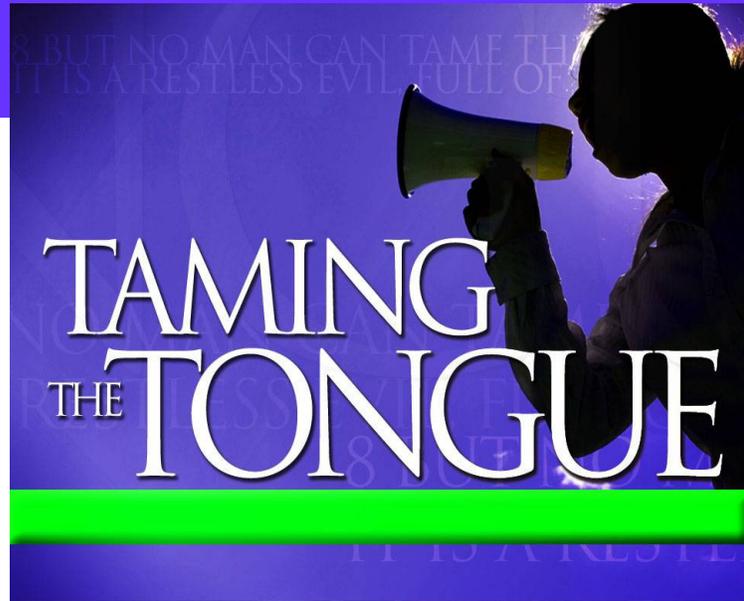
Proverbs 16:23, 24
Proverbs 18:4, 21
Proverbs 12:18, 25
Proverbs 18:4
Proverbs 15:28
Proverbs 28:7
Proverbs 26:7-9
Matthew 12:34b
Psalm 119:103

DIGGING DEEPER

According to Strong's Concordance, the figurative meaning of the Hebrew word for tongue can mean speech, an ingot, a fork of flame, a cove of water. James used the flame nuance for his picture of the power of the tongue in James 3:10-11.

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help my words to please You and to bring healing and edification to others. Give me a pure heart so that my speech is an honest reflection of who I am.
Amen



THE POWER OF OUR WORDS

Perhaps no affliction is more common to mankind than our misuse of words. King Solomon declares that our tongues have the power of life and death (Proverbs 18:21), and he supports this declaration by devoting more of the book of Proverbs to this topic than any other. He recognizes that with forethought, the tongue can heal, encourage and teach (Proverbs 16:23). However, without warning, our words can destroy relationships, break spirits and negate our witness (Proverbs 12:18). So powerful is this slippery instrument that God provides numerous warnings and admonitions throughout Scripture.

The tongue is an amazing organ! In Proverbs 25:15, Solomon writes:

“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.” NIV

This loosely attached muscle has a direct line to the heart to reveal the depths of our thinking. See Matthew 12:34b. Jesus clearly teaches that our words reflect the condition of our hearts. Our words are the litmus paper revealing our spiritual state:

“Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”
Matthew 12:34-35 (NIV)

Before Jesus ever came on the scene, Solomon understood this concept. However, Solomon's spiritual condition was reflected in his writings-and the portrait was not flattering. In 1 Kings 3:7-9, Solomon was just beginning his reign and the Lord appeared to him. Solomon, in his prayer, demonstrated humility, sincerity, faith, and fervor in his relationship with God:

"Now, O LORD my God, you have made *your servant* king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. *Your servant* is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give *your servant* a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" (NIV)

Solomon expressed his humility and commitment to God by calling himself God's servant. He also recognized that he was only ruler of Israel because God Himself had placed him there. Solomon confessed to God that he did not have the ability or strength to govern alone. When he spoke of Israel, the Hebrew king called the Israelites a "great people." His high regard for his Hebrew countrymen is noteworthy because he does not refer to them in this way again.

The king's words in Ecclesiastes, the last book he wrote at the end of his life, reflected a much different attitude toward God and toward his reign over Israel. He speaks in jaded, arrogant tones, and did not express his thoughts to God. Instead, he writes "I thought to *myself*..." He attributes the glories of his kingdom to himself rather than God. When he comments that what is twisted cannot be straightened, he implies that God cannot intervene in a supernatural way. All things simply happen according to nature. When did Solomon's faith turn to fatalism? Notice the contrast in tone in Solomon's words I Ecclesiastes 1:12-17, and how often he uses the pronoun "I":

"*I*, the Teacher, was king over Israel. *I* devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid upon men. *I* have seen all the things that are done under the sun, all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. *I* thought to myself, 'Look, *I* have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; *I* have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge.' Then *I* applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. "

- Compare the two passages above. What do you observe about Solomon's change in attitude? What are the character qualities you observe from the first passage? What are the deficiencies you identify in the latter?
- Think about your first days as a new believer. What were your attitudes? Were you grateful, excited, full of faith? Do you still maintain joy and faith in your walk with God, or do you find yourself living a cynical, mundane existence "under the sun"? What brought you joy in the early days of your faith? What attitudes would you like to have now?
- Recall the words that you have spoken to others the last few days. Did you utter words of joy and hope? Why or why not? List some of the words that you would like to speak to others today to encourage them. List some words that you can say to God in prayer to express your love for Him and your faith in Him.

THE TONGUE AND THE HEART

This loosely attached muscle we call the tongue has a direct line to the heart to reveal the depths of our thinking. As we age, the part of our brain that inhibits inappropriate speech has diminished effectiveness. An oft quoted saying is “If you want to know the truth, ask a five-year-old or an eighty-year-old.” In our earliest and latest years, our hearts should be pure, or the impurity will come forth. In Proverbs 10:11, Solomon writes “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.” (NIV) A fountain is free-flowing, and the verb ‘overwhelms’ also indicates free flow, natural movement. Nothing could be more natural than saying what’s going on inside our hearts and heads. So Solomon’s first lesson is to clean up your heart and seek wisdom.

The key to gracious, wise, faith-building words is a pure heart. That’s why Solomon writes in Proverbs 6:23 “A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.” (NIV) We can choose to fill our thoughts with things that are pure and uplifting, or we can input angry, bitter, and impure reflections. The media-driven age in which we live provides us with countless choices. What we watch, what we hear, what we allow through through the filter that we call our “conscience” will not be hidden. The data will be regurgitated when we least expect it. The conscience is the interface between the soul and spirit; therefore, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, He will faithfully guide our choices. Inner beauty and kind words are the result. We should carefully heed Paul’s words in Philippians 4:8:

“For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them].” (AMP)

- Consider carefully the words of Philippians 4:8. Underline each synonym. Then write some words that would reflect that attitude. For example, if you think a “lovable thought” towards someone, you would say words of affection, affirmation, and acceptance to them.
- Spend some time meditating on God. Think of His attributes. List some of them here (forgiving, just, faithful, etc.) Now speak some of those words of praise and adoration to Him in prayer. Write Him a “thank you note”-a letter of thanksgiving.

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

In the scriptures below, summarize the verse and list the lesson Solomon was teaching about the tongue

Proverbs 16:23, 24

Proverbs 18:4,21

Proverbs 12:18, 25

Proverbs 15:28

Proverbs 28:7

Proverbs 26:7-9