

The Tool in Everyone's Mouth

LIFE FAITH FUSION DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

SCRIPTURE STUDY

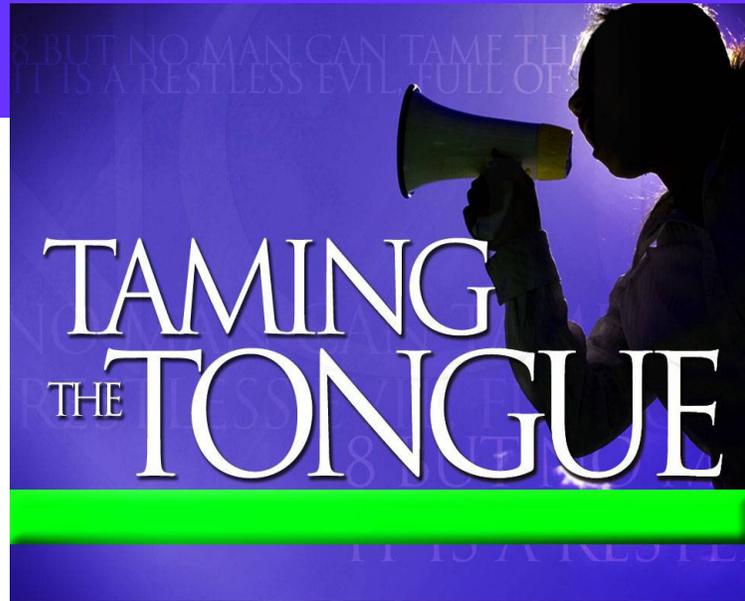
Proverbs 10:19
Proverbs 13:3
Proverbs 10:19
Ecclesiastes 5:2-3
James 3:5-6
Romans 8:5-7
Romans 12:1-2
James 3:5-6
Ecclesiastes 5:2-3
Galatians 5:16, 22-23
Matthew 24:35
John 14:23-24

DIGGING DEEPER

The Greek word most often used for self-control is *egkrateia*, which means mastery. Mastery is a process that requires time, patience, and effort.

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to learn to control my tongue by surrendering my life to you on a day-to-day basis.
Amen



CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

Part of **using the tongue wisely is controlling it well**. The wise person exercises restraint while the fool is quick to spill an avalanche of words before thinking. Our culture encourages us to get things off of our chests, to spill our guts, and to vent our emotions, even if others are hurt in the process. Psychologists' offices are full of men and women who have been damaged by the insensitive taunting of a school-yard bully, the frustrated words of a frazzled parent, the critical comments of a dear friend, or even the verbal abuse of a spouse.

King Solomon and James both warn us that our words are extremely powerful, and he reminds us that living the righteous life God desires includes carefully managing every word we speak. Solomon's pithy proverb to streamline our endless flow of verbiage is found in chapter 10, verse 19:

"When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise." (NIV)

We learned from James 3:5-6 in the previous lesson that the tongue can set in motion the agenda of Satan. Conversely, in Proverbs 10, we learn that controlling our tongues can keep us from sin. So what are some steps we can take to control this unruly appendage?

- Have you ever gotten into trouble from something you have said? What was it? Do you find yourself thinking before you speak? Why or why not is this a challenge for you?

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Learning to hold your tongue begins with learning to listen. When we quiet ourselves before God in prayer, we are able to clarify His will for our lives. We are able to peacefully wait, instead of rushing headlong into trouble. Waiting upon God gives us heavenly perspective-He is in heaven-we are on earth. Looking down upon our lives as we peer over the parapets of heaven allows us to avoid frantic activity and irresponsible over commitment. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes 5:2-3, succinctly identifies the futility of our hasty entrance into His throne room:

“Don’t make rash promises, and don’t be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few. Too much activity gives you restless dreams; too many words make you a fool.” (NIV)

James, in James 1:19, affirms that our discipline to listen first will cause us to be slow to speak and also slow to respond in anger. King Solomon, in Proverbs 13:3, assures us that he who controls his tongue will live longer. In Proverbs 16:32, Solomon observes that a man who controls his temper is more powerful than a soldier who captures a city. James writes in James 3:2 that a man who speaks with discretion will be able to keep his body in check. Our first step towards controlling our tongues is to simply be quiet and measure our words.

- Spend some time waiting before God in prayer. Write down those areas of your life that you have been seeing things from a worldly perspective instead of a heavenly perspective. Ask Him to show you His view of your life. What does He say?

- Can you remember a time when you made a hasty promise? What were the circumstances that surrounded it? What were your motives (to please someone, to make yourself look better, etc)? Ask God for forgiveness and spend some time thinking of wise boundaries you can set to avoid over commitment in the future.

- List some benefits you can experience in your daily life from controlling your words. How will it impact your relationships and your lifestyle?

OFFER YOURSELF TO GOD

God does not ask us to control our tongues without His help. Only by His grace and strength can we begin to take control of our wagging tongues. Self-control, on the surface, implies human effort. But self-control is the fruit of God’s indwelling Spirit in our lives. Paul the apostle explains the dilemma of trying to live a godly life in our own strength in Romans 8:5-7:

“Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God’s laws, and it never will.” (NIV)

The life of self-control is a life yielded to the Holy Spirit. Only by surrendering to a higher calling can we put to death the mind-control of our sinful nature. As we allow God’s Word to permeate our thinking, our speech and lifestyle will be revolutionized. Jesus described “meek person” as one who would inherit the earth. One of the chief ways Christ described Himself was “meek and lowly in heart.” Our culture sees the meek person as wishy-washy. Meek people are push-overs. “Meekness” in Greek is a picture of a mighty steed controlled by a bridle to do the rider’s bidding. When we are meek, under the control of the Holy Spirit, we can be used of God in powerful ways.

Instead of mustering up strength to control ourselves, self-control is the natural outgrowth of the life of the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, these qualities are evident in our lives:

“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you **will not** gratify the desires of the sinful nature...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:16, 22-23 (NIV)

- Romans 12:1-2 is a beautiful portrait of what offering our bodies to God looks like. What does he mean by a “living sacrifice”? How does God feel about such a commitment? What transforms our behaviors (verse 2a)? What is the result (verse 2b)?
- List the fruits of the Spirit here. How would they impact your words? For example, what are some loving words? Write them here. What are some joyful words? List them here.
- Who are some people in your life that need kind words today? List them here. Take time to write them a note. Who do you know that needs cheering up? List them here. Call them and encourage them today.

JESUS' WORDS

The words of Jesus provide us with a model of wise talk. He comforted the hurting. He comforted Mary of Bethany as she mourned the death of her brother, Lazarus (John 11:35-36). He encouraged the down-hearted disciples in John 14:1-3. He spoke words of acceptance to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:5, and words of forgiveness to the adulterous woman in John 8:10-11. Christ did not mince words. He chided the Pharisees for their arrogance and hypocrisy in Matthew 23. He did not speak a word to King Herod when the wicked king demanded a showy trick to prove his divinity (Luke 23:7-9). From studying the life and ministry of Jesus, we can discover a model for wise speech:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” Matthew 24:35

“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. ***These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.***’ John 14:23-24

Truly, the words we speak are given to us by God when we surrender our lives to Him. We can bring the message of salvation, we can comfort the hurting, we can reconcile enemies and support our friends.

- From your study of the New Testament verses in the above paragraph, what do you learn about Jesus' wise speech?
- How can you emulate Christ's use of words in your own life? Write on the back of this sheet.

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

Read the following verses and write your observations on the back of this sheet.

Matthew 24:35, John 14:23-24, Romans 8:5-7, James 1:19