

Controlling Your Tongue

Psalm 19:14

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

Psalm 141:3

"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."

James 3:10

"Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, **this should not be.**"

James 3:1-18

1. **The tongue has power to direct.** In verses 3 and 4 we have the illustration of the bit and the rudder. Our words can direct others into the right or the wrong path—look up Proverbs 18:21. Beware of the idle word, the questionable story, the half-truth, the deliberate lie. All these could change the course of a life and lead it to destruction. On the other hand, the right word may direct someone out of sin and into salvation. How we need the Lord to control our tongue!
2. **The tongue has power to destroy or heal--** Matthew 12:34-35. A tiny spark can set a whole forest on fire, and the tongue is like a small flame—look up Proverbs 16:27. An evil tongue can also spread poison. On the other hand, a spiritual tongue is medicine—look up Proverbs 12:18; it will heal and not hurt.
3. **The tongue has power to delight.** In verses 9-12 it is impossible for a spring to produce both fresh and salt water at the same time. In the same way, the tongue cannot speak blessing and cursing (Proverbs 18:4). A tree cannot bear two kinds of fruit (Proverbs 13:2; Proverbs 18:20-21).

1. THE WRONG USE OF THE TONGUE

1. **Blaming God when tempted to do wrong** (James 1:13-14). God never tempts us to sin; temptation arises when a man is lured away by his own lust.

2. **Speaking hypocritically** (James 1:26). It is easy to do this, and what a terrible statement about this very thing is found in Titus 1:16! Actions speak louder than words!!!
3. **Expressing discrimination between rich and poor fellow-believers** (James 2:1-4). Discrimination between people's color, background, race and status in life can be thoroughly un-Christian.
4. **Speaking unsympathetically to those in need** (James 2:15-16). With so much poverty in our world, we need to search our hearts.
5. **Boasting and flattering, thus causing a destructive fire** (James 3:5). Just one word can cause a family upset or division in a church; see James 3:14.
6. **Grumbling against each other** (James 4:12; 5:9). Moffatt renders Romans 14:12-13: "Each of us will have to answer for himself to God, so stop criticising one another!"
7. **Swearing or blaspheming** (James 5:12). Many non-Christians are careless with their words, even taking the Lord's name in vain. How careful we must be as believers — 1 Peter 3:10.
8. **Gossip**— I know that this is addressed in some of the verses above. It is also important to point it out how much damage that this can do.

Proverbs 20:19

"He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip."

Psalms 34:13

"Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit."

Proverbs 11:13

"He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter."

Psalms 141:3

"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."

9. **Bitterness**—Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

Acts 8:23

"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

James 3:14

"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth."

Romans 3:14

"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS;"

Job 7:11

"Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

Ephesians 4:31-32

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

2. THE RIGHT USE OF THE TONGUE

1. **To praise God (A Sacrifice to our Lord)** (James 3:9), which in one translation reads, "We use our tongue to praise our Heavenly Father ." We should be doing this every day (Psalm 51:15)—read through Psalms 148, 149 and 150!
2. **To pray to God:**
 - (1) For wisdom (James 1:5-6).
 - (2) For help for those in trouble and for healing (James 5:13-16).
 - (3) "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:25)
 - (4) **"I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue." (Psalm 66:17)**
3. **To sing to the Lord** (James 5:13). (Psalm 51:14.)
4. **To witness for the Lord.** This is not actually mentioned by James, but we must include it—look up Psalm 107:2; Acts 1:8.

5. To encourage

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Hebrews 10:24

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works ."

Hebrews 10:24-25

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

6. To Build up

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."
(NLT)

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." (NLT)

We have seen that our tongues can be used in many bad ways and in a number of good ways. How can it be controlled? Only by the Holy Spirit. Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to take control of your tongue? In Romans 6:13 we are exhorted to offer the parts of our body to God "as instruments of righteousness" — **our** hands, eyes, feet ...and our tongue. Have you ever given your tongue to the Lord for Him to control it?

Questions to ask yourself.....

1. **How would God want me to respond?**

2. **What would God want me to say?**

3. **When would God want me respond?**

4. **So when do we respond?**

Our tongues, together with our sinful human nature, can tear down and destroy. But if we center our lives on Christ, our tongues can build up and edify others, and glorify God.