

TAMING THE TONGUE

MATTHEW 12

INTRODUCTION

- **I came** across a statistic that shocked me. I was not sure I believed it. I read that the average person speaks 11,000,000 words a year. At the age of 65 it is 715,000,000 words. Imagine the magnitude of that many words.
- Words are incredibly powerful. They can build up, encourage, and motivate. Words can also tear down, hurt, and cause horrible scars.
- Words can hurt. Some of us are living with the scars of the hurtful words of others. The Bible reminds us that "Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Prov 18:21, GENESIS 1 .JOHN 1
- Words matter to God. He keeps a record of our words. Jesus said, "I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak." Matt 12:36 , Jesus spoke plainly about our use of words. He tells us, "for every careless word" there will be an accounting in the day of judgment. We expect Jesus to condemn profane and vile uses of the tongue, but idle words? We say some words carelessly, without concern for their impact on others. Why would God care about those? We assume that the sins of our tongue are minor sins, sins that God will overlook. Jesus was fully aware of the devastating nature of our words.

HOW TO USE WORDS

- The Bible has a lot to say about how we use our words. Here are a few biblical principles about the use of words.
- **A. Refrain from attack words**
- Words can be used as a weapon to lash into people. Sometimes our goal is to hurt people by what we say. The first thing some people do in the morning is brush their teeth and sharpen their tongue.
- Words can cut like a knife and we want to stick the dagger in deep. God does not want us to use our words as a weapon. He wants us to use our words to bless others. Jesus says in Matthew 5:44, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

REFRAIN FROM GOSSIP

- We need to be careful about the news we share concerning others. Someone said, "There is only one thing as difficult as unscrambling an egg, and that's unspreading a rumor." Gossip is destructive, and it is subtle. Someone begins a conversation: "Did you hear?" Before you know it, you're caught up in gossip. Don't believe everything you hear. Someone said, "A gossip usually makes a mountain out of a molehill by adding some dirt."
- Be careful about listening to gossip. Is listening to gossip all that much worse than telling it? There's a saying, "He who gossips to you will gossip about you."
- The Bible warns us...
- "The one who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid someone with a big mouth." Prov 20:19 (HCSB)
- "A contrary man spreads conflict, and a gossip separates friends." Prov 16:28 (HCSB)
- Watch out for gossip.



USE CLEAN WORDS

Some words are just not proper to speak. When we were kids our parents would wash our mouths out with soap if we said such words. Having a foul mouth is not something to be proud of. Some words are not supposed to be said.

USE TRUTHFUL WORDS

- Jesus said, "But let your word 'yes' be 'yes,' and your 'no' be 'no.' Anything more than this is from the evil one." Matt 5:37 (HCSB) People need to believe what we say. Lying destroys our credibility. Chances are that we'll eventually be caught if we make a practice of lying.
- I heard a story about a woman who was hosting guests for dinner. She decided to serve chicken. She told the butcher she'd like to buy chicken. The butcher opened his freezer case, and saw only one chicken. He put it on the scale and said "two pounds." The lady responded, "Oh, I wanted one bigger than that." The butcher, not wanting to lose a sale, took the chicken off the scale, put it back in the freezer and pulled up the same chicken - his last chicken - and said, "three pounds." The woman answered, "Great, I'll take both of them." The butcher had a problem. Be honest. Let the words that flow from your mouth be truthful.

USE EDIFYING WORDS

- The Bible says, "No rotten talk should come from your mouth, but only what is good for the building up of someone in need, in order to give grace to those who hear." Eph 4:29 .
- The Bible challenges us to use our words to help people, to build others up, not to tear them down. A popular Zig Ziglar saying is, "He climbs highest who helps another up." Our words can have an incredibly positive effect. How many of us have found great comfort or encouragement because of what someone said to us? Don't underestimate the value of an encouraging word.
- Perhaps you are thinking, Okay pastor, you've made your point, I need to make some changes on the way I use my tongue. But how do I do it? Perhaps you've tried to make some changes in your speech but it ended in failure. You want to know what you can do to succeed this time.

TRANSFORM THE TONGUE

Transforming the tongue begins with a change in the heart. Jesus said, "But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a man." Matt 15:18 (HCSB). The heart influences the tongue. When it is full of anger, selfishness, envy, pride, and all the other ugly "stuff" that can invade our hearts, we are affected in everything we do.

- I heard about a joke some children played on their grandfather. They found him asleep on the sofa in the living room. One of the youngsters got the bright idea to spread some Limburger cheese in Grandpa's mustache. After a while grandpa woke up and began to smell that Limburger cheese and said, "Something in this living room stinks." He went into the kitchen, still smelling the Limburger cheese in his mustache, and said, "Something in this room stinks." Finally, he stuck his head out the back door and says, "Ah, the whole world stinks!"
- Some of us have Limburger cheese in our hearts. The problem is not out there, it's within us. Something needs to change within us. Our focus needs to be transformed. Instead of looking for the bad in a situation, we need to look for the good. Instead of being preoccupied with self-interest, we need to focus on the interests of others. Changing our hearts is a good place to start.
- We need to think before we speak. The Bible teaches, "My dearly loved brothers, understand this: everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness." James 1:19-20 (HCSB)
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