

The Tamed Tongue

By Daryl Wingerd

Your tongue may be the most dangerous weapon you possess. When unleashed (or *unsheathed*) without restraint, it can cut more deeply than a sword (Ps. 52:2; Ps. 57:4; Ps. 64:3; Prov. 12:18). But the tongue can also be used for encouragement and healing—for blessing rather than cursing.

The Bible has much to say about restraining and retraining our tongues. Though James tells us that the tongue is difficult to tame, “a restless evil and full of deadly poison” (3:8), the overall message of Scripture is that the tongue of the believer can, and indeed *must* be brought under control.

Consider the following selection of biblical passages concerning the way our tongues—our words—ought to be used. These reflect not only what is actually said, but also the attitudes behind the words. Perhaps you could post some of these as reminders on your fridge or bathroom mirror.



- He does not slander with his tongue . . . nor takes up a reproach against his friend (Ps. 15:3).
- Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit (Ps. 34:13).
- The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice (Ps. 37:30).
- I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue (Ps. 39:1).
- My tongue also will utter your righteousness all day long (Ps. 71:24).
- When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19).
- There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing (Prov. 12:18).

- The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable (Prov. 15:2).
- He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles (Prov. 21:23).
- She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue (Prov. 31:26).
- Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear (Eph. 4:29).

Clearly there is no room in the Bible’s teaching for Christians to talk just like the world. But the issue isn’t just our speech. We must avoid the kinds of worldly attitudes that drive the unwholesome speech we hear all around us every day.

So important are our words that Jesus said, “Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37).

With that in mind, three final passages of Scripture are worthy of very careful reflection:

- If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless (James 1:26).
- Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips (Ps. 141:3).
- Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer (Ps. 19:14).