



Do You Always Watch What You Say?

James 3:10: (NKJV) *"Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."*

Did you ever wonder how many words the average person utters in a day? Did you ever wonder how many of those words uttered are

constructive, destructive or just plain idle talk? While we are not going to try and pinpoint percentages, we are going to talk about talking and the effects that it has on those who hear as well as the effects on those who speak. Is gossip ever good? Do we ever slander anyone without truly meaning to do so? Stay with us as we look into the spoken word and Biblical principles that can help us focus on making our words positive proactive and powerful!

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."
- Josh Billings

Questions for Consideration:

1. Why are our words so powerful?
2. How can we make our words tools and not weapons?

1. Why are our words so powerful?

Let's start with an example from Job. Here was a man being tested to the limits of endurance and his (uninvited) friends, his "comforters" come, and give him their words. One of his reactions to this is found in the following text:

Job 6:22-29: (NKJV) *"²²Did I ever say, 'Bring something to me'? Or, 'Offer a bribe for me from your wealth'? ²³Or, 'Deliver me from the enemy's hand'? Or, 'Redeem me from the hand of oppressors'? ²⁴'Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. ²⁵How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove? ²⁶Do you intend to rebuke my words, and the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind? ²⁷Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, and you undermine your friend. ²⁸Now therefore, be pleased to look at me; For I would never lie to your face. ²⁹Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands!"*

Job is explaining that he wasn't a bad person, but the friend is saying Job deserves these terrible circumstances. Job is trying to understand the truth of the matter. Right words can set you on a course that can bring you growth and strength through life. Words have power - our words paint pictures and elicit reactions.

Our words can make our religion vain:

James 1:26: *"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."*

If we proclaim we are religious but don't bridle our tongues, we are hypocrites.

Our words can deceive:

Psalms 34:13: *"Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking **guile** <4820>."*



Guile: Strong's #4820 mirmah (meer-maw'); deceiving; fraud

1 Peter 3:10: *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:"*

Our words signal our direction to those around us:

James 5:12: (NKJV) *"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment."*

Our words can bring us destruction:

Proverbs 13:3: *"He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."*

Our words can condemn us:

Matthew 12:37: *"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."*

Our words can praise:

Psalms 145:4-5: (NKJV) *"⁴One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. ⁵I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works."*

Psalms 145:21: (NKJV) *"My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever."*

By speaking, everyone that hears it can react and enter into the same praising.

What does James describe as the result and power of an errant tongue?

James 3:1-18: (ASV) *"¹Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment. ²For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. ³Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. ⁴Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. ⁵So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind. ⁸But the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. ⁹Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God: ¹⁰out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. ¹¹Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet. ¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. ¹⁶For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. ¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy ¹⁸And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace."*



"Words once spoke can never
be recall'd". - **Wentworth Dillon,**
Art of Poetry



2. How can we make our words tools and not weapons?

This question really carries with it the essence of the paradox of our words. Within each of us is the ability to build up or to tear down, to encourage or to discourage, to inspire or to let down, to feed a cause or to starve it. All of this we are capable of - and all we need are words.

James 3:2: (ASV) *"For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also."*



**First lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that everyone has the same potential issues with
the misuse of words.**

Galatians 5:13-17, 25: (ASV) *"¹³For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. ¹⁵But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would...²⁵If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. ²⁶Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another."*

*Give people
the benefit
of the doubt.*

We are given something wonderful, but it can be used improperly. We all have the same problem. We all love to be forgiven for improper words, and we should do the same for others.

James 3:3-5: (ASV) *"³Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. ⁴Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. ⁵So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire!"*



The tongue is small and seemingly insignificant, but it can cause so much trouble.



Second lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that controlling your tongue is the KEY to overcoming.

James 1:4: "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The development of the control of our words does not happen overnight.

Matthew 12:33-37: (ASV) "³³Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? **for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.** ³⁵The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. ³⁶And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷**For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.**"

Every idle word will have to be accounted for. Is this text implying that all of what we say has its source that is at least in part from our hearts?

If this is the case, then our words can serve as a "mirror of truth" in which we can see ourselves! If we continually have conversations that are destructive, that's what our hearts are about.

Words are the key - what are some **negative things** we must avoid?



- **Envy**: Proverbs 14:30: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."
- **Slander**: According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, slander is the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation. (Libel is the same, only it reflects words in a printed form instead of a spoken form.)

1 Timothy 3:10-11: (ASV) "¹⁰And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. ¹¹Women in like manner must be grave, not **slanderers**, temperate, faithful in all things."

Slanderers: Strong's #1228 diabolos (dee-ab'-ol-os); a traducer; specially, Satan

- **Gossip**: According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, gossip is a rumor or report of an intimate nature, chatty talk.

Gossip leads to slander, but how do we know when we are crossing the line?

Resolve
each day
to speak
kindly.



Here are three suggested gates our words must pass through before they pass our lips:



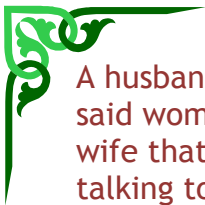
1. Is it TRUE? (But you can still gossip and slander with something that is true.)



2. Is it KIND? (The ability to filter comes through kindness and narrows things down.)



3. Is it NECESSARY?



A husband looking through the paper came upon a study that said women use more words than men. Excited to prove to his wife that he had been right all along when he accused her of talking too much, he showed her the study results. It read "Men use about 15,000 words per day, but women use 30,000." The wife thought for a while, then finally she said to her husband, "It's because we have to repeat everything we say." The husband said, "What?"



"The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns, as it were, instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink."

- George Orwell, The Lion and the Unicorn

James 3:6-7: (ASV) *"⁶And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind."*



**Third lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that the natural propensity of the tongue is toward evil.**

Ephesians 4:29-31: (ASV) *"²⁹Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear. ³⁰And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice:"*

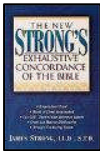


Did you spot the three gates in that Scripture?



1. Is it **TRUE**? *"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth"*
2. Is it **KIND**? *"but such as is good for edifying as the need may be"*
3. Is it **NECESSARY**? *"that it may give grace to them that hear"*

Romans 12:1-2: (ASV) *"¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. ²And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the **renewing** of your mind, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*



Transformed: Strong's #3339 metamorphoo (met-am-or-fo'-o); to transform literally or figuratively, metamorphose

Renewing: Strong's #342 anakainosis (an-ak-ah'-ee-no-sis); renovation

Psalms 32:9: *"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."*

Psalms 39:1: *"To the chief Musician...A Psalm of David. I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me."*

Bridle yourself! Sometimes because of our reaction to a situation, we just say whatever comes to mind without thinking it through. Can we stop and ask, is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?



*"Our words have wings,
but fly not where we
would." - George Eliot,
The Spanish Gypsy*

James 3:9-12: (ASV) *"⁹Therewith **bless** we the Lord and Father; and therewith **curse** we men, who are made after the likeness of God: ¹⁰out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. ¹¹Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet."*

Here is a profound point in all of its simplicity. It is easy for us as Christians to "bless" God. However, it seems as though it is just as easy to "curse" men. This ought not to be so!



**Fourth lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that evil from our lips is not acceptable
based on the grace given us.**

We have been given far too much to fall into this bitterness of words that damage and hurt. It is such an important part of our lives to be able to rise above that. James is telling us to look in the mirror and realize it is easy to religiously praise and bless God, but do you have that same attitude towards your brother?

When it is absolutely necessary (such as a parent to a child), how do you criticize in a way that can be positive? Consider beginning and ending with something positive.

Matthew 5:44: *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"*

Romans 12:14: *"Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not."*

1 Peter 3:10-12: (NRSV) *"¹⁰For those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it."*

Once we say the words, we feel committed to the position. If we have spoken badly about someone, now we are committed to that position. That puts us in a precarious spot if we spoke out of turn. Our actions have to back up our words because pride kicks in and a trap is set.

James 3:13: (ASV) *"¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom."*



**Fifth lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that true wisdom brings true change in your life.**

It is easy to just say what you feel. It is easy to contribute to the destruction of another. But this is God's wisdom, so seek examples of wisdom and use words in the same way that such examples use them.

Psalms 107:43: *"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD."*

Matthew 7:24-27: (ASV) *"²⁴Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: ²⁵and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. ²⁶And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: ²⁷and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."*



Hebrews 13:5-9: (NRSV) *"⁵Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" ⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them."*

Look at those who are guiding you spiritually. Emulate them if they are living the example of Jesus.

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3: *"²Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. ³For a dream cometh through the multitude of business: and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words."*

(Source: <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languageelog/archives/003420.html>)

A woman can effortlessly speak an average of 6,000-8,000 words a day. She uses an additional 2,000-3,000 vocal sounds to communicate, as well as 8,000-10,000 facial expressions, head movements, and other body language signals. This gives her a daily average of more than 20,000 communications. That explains why the British Medical Association recently reported that women are four times more likely to suffer from jaw problems.

Contrast a woman's daily "chatter" to that of a man. He utters just 2,000-4,000 words and 1,000-2,000 vocal sounds, and makes a mere 2,000-3,000 body language signals. His daily average adds up to around 7,000 communication "words" -- just over a third the output of a woman.

"Words have a magical power. They can bring either the greatest happiness or deepest despair; they can transfer knowledge from teacher to student; words enable the orator to sway his audience and dictate its decisions. Words are capable of arousing the strongest emotions and prompting all men's actions."
- Sigmund Freud, *The Educator's Book of Quotes*

*Sometimes
saying nothing is
the
wisest thing.*

James 3:14-18: (ASV) *"¹⁴But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. ¹⁶For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. ¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace."*

Remember Job's "comforters" came and sat with Job for seven days, quietly experiencing his pain...and then they started talking! Because they were not using Godly wisdom, they assumed Job had been unfaithful to God.



**Sixth lesson in the wielding of this tool/weapon:
Realize that the wisdom we are to use is VERY SPECIFIC.**

2 Corinthians 12:19-21: (NRSV) *"¹⁹Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up. ²⁰For I fear that when I come, I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish; I fear that there may perhaps be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and that I may have to mourn over many who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced."*

Proverbs 10:18-21: (ASV) *"¹⁸He that hideth hatred is of lying lips; And he that uttereth a slander is a fool. ¹⁹In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely. ²⁰The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver: The heart of the wicked is little worth. ²¹The lips of the righteous feed many; But the foolish die for lack of understanding."*

*"Words are soldiers of fortune,
hired by different ideas."
-Maxwell Bodenheim*

It is important not only to have the right tools, but they have to be in the right condition.

Matthew 5:21-26: (KJV) *"²¹Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²²But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. ²³Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."*

Be first reconciled with your brother - take the emotion out and communicate the problem. Calling your brother "Raca" (villain or literally "blockhead," name calling, a scornful word spoken out of pride) is a great insult and you are in danger of judgment. But if you call your brother a "fool," you are in danger of destroying your own spiritual life. That's how serious slander is.

Jesus' "but I say unto you" is clear - the Law says killing is wrong, but killing your brother's reputation through slander is also wrong and equally subject to judgment.

Our words are tools that can do wonderful, miraculous things; and yet those same words can end up being weapons that tear down and destroy. Don't let that happen! Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? Use these things to build one another up in our most holy faith. Use your words to glorify God by building up your brother.

*So do you always watch what you say?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



For Your Continued Study:

We ran out of time! Here are additional Scriptures for your consideration:

Titus 3:1-2: (ASV) *"¹Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, ²to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men."*

Isaiah 37:29: *"Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest."*

Matthew 5:43-48: (KJV) *"⁴³Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴But I say unto you, Love your enemies, **ble**ss them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? ⁴⁷And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? ⁴⁸Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."*

1 Peter 3:8-12: (NRSV) *"⁸Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For **'Those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹let them turn away from evil and do good; let them seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'**"*

1 Timothy 6:6-12: (NRSV) *"⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. ¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."*