A photograph of a sunset over a pier. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with some clouds. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a pier extends into the water. Several people are walking on the pier, their figures silhouetted against the bright sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

*The Significance
Of
Speech*

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Forward

By speaking the right things, you can bring life. By speaking the wrong things, you can bring death. Are you considering the end results before you speak?

What you say and what you *don't* say are both important. Proper speech is not only saying the right words at the right time, but it is also controlling your desire to say what you shouldn't.

If you want to be self-controlled, begin with your tongue. Stop and think before you react or speak. If you can control this small but powerful member, you can control the rest of your body.

The mouth can be used either as a weapon or a tool, hurting relationships or building them up.

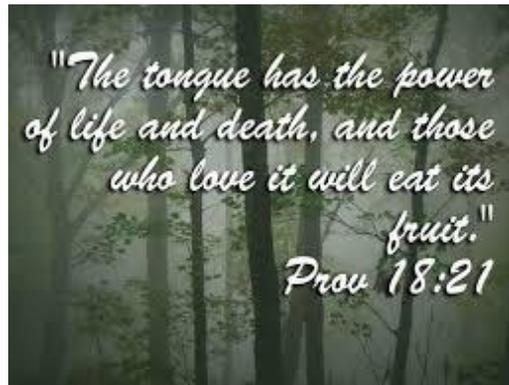
Sadly, it is often easier to destroy than to build, and most people have received more destructive comments than those that build up.

Every person you meet today is either a demolition site or a construction opportunity. Your words will make a difference. Will they be weapons for destruction or tools for construction?

Throughout this study are many Scriptures to guide you as to when to speak, and when to remain silent

May God give you wisdom through the Holy Spirit to understand and become or continue in the ministry God has given to you?

Chapter 1



Life and death are in the power of the tongue.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

There are three basic principles for making sound decisions: (1) get the facts before answering; (2) be open to new ideas; (3) make sure you hear both sides of the story before judging. All three principles center on seeking additional information. This is difficult work.

By speaking the right things, you can bring life. By speaking the wrong things, you can bring death. Are you considering the end results before you speak?

James 3:1-2

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

For we all stumble in many ways if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

Teaching was a highly valued and respected profession in Jewish culture, and many Jews who embraced Christianity wanted to become teachers.

James warned that although it is good to aspire to teach, the teachers' responsibility is great because their words and example affect others' spiritual lives.

If you are in a teaching or leadership role, how are you affecting those you lead?

What you say and what you *don't* say are both important. Proper speech is not only saying the right words at the right time, but it is also controlling your desire to say what you shouldn't.

Examples of an untamed tongue include:

Gossiping,
Putting others down,
Bragging,
Manipulating,
False teaching,
Exaggerating,
Complaining,
Flattering, and
Lying.

Before you speak, ask, “Is what I want to say true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?”

Proverbs 15:2

The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.

At times it seems that God has let evil run rampant in the world, and we wonder if he even notices it. But God sees everything clearly—both the evil actions and the evil intentions lying behind them (Proverbs 15:11).

He is not an indifferent observer. He cares and is active in our world. Right now, his work may be unseen and unfelt, but don’t give up. One day he will wipe out evil and punish the evildoers, just as he will establish the good and reward those who do his will.

Proverbs 12:13-14

An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will escape from trouble.

A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man's hands will return to him.

Sinful talk is twisting the facts to support your claims. Those who do this are likely to be trapped by their own lies. But for someone who always tells the truth, the facts—plain and unvarnished—give an unshakable defense.

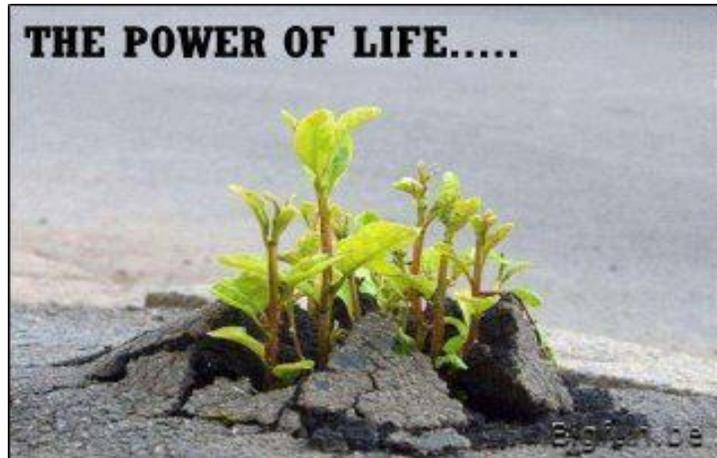
If you find that you always have to defend yourself to others, maybe your honesty is less than it should be. (See the chart in Proverbs 20:7.)

Proverbs 10:14

Wise people treasure knowledge, but the babbling of a fool invites trouble.

No amount of speech, can take the place of the right word spoken at the right moment.

Chapter 2



One who guards his mouth preserves life

Proverbs 13:3

The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips come to ruin.

You have not mastered self-control if you do not control what you say. Words can cut and destroy.

James recognized this truth when he stated, "The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts" (James 3:5).

If you want to be self-controlled, begin with your tongue. Stop and think before you react or speak. If you can control this small but powerful member, you can control the rest of your body.

Proverbs 14:3

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them.

Man at times is his own worst enemy when he uses words to bring trouble on himself. The words of the wise keep them out of trouble.

A fools lips brings strife

Proverbs 18:6-7

A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snares of his soul.

Fools get into constant quarrels; they are asking for a beating. Their lips get them into trouble.

Proverbs 21:23

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles.

If you remain silent, you will stay out of trouble.

Proverbs 11:9

With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.

The mouth can be used either as a weapon or a tool, hurting relationships or building them up.

Sadly, it is often easier to destroy than to build, and most people have received more destructive comments than those that build up.

Every person you meet today is either a demolition site or a construction opportunity. Your words will make a difference. Will they be weapons for destruction or tools for construction?

Job 19:2

"How long will you torment me and crush me with words?"

It is easy to point out someone else's faults or sins. Job's friends accused him of sin to make him feel guilty, not to encourage or correct him.

If we feel we must admonish someone, we should be sure we are confronting that person because we love him, not because we are annoyed, inconvenienced, or seeking to blame him.

Psalms 55:20-21

He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him; He has violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.

When one speaks with smooth words, but their motive is to destroy and hurt. Such words become daggers or as a sword.

Psalms 57:4

My soul is among lions; I must lay among those who breathe forth fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows and their tongue a sharp sword.

At times, people who gossip about us or who criticize us may surround us. Verbal cruelty can damage us as badly as physical abuse.

Rather than answering with hateful words, we, like David, can talk with God concerning the problem.

Chapter 3



The tongue is like a sword

Psalms 64:3-4

Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword they aimed bitter speech as their arrow, to shoot from concealment at the blameless; suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.

The words spoken against us are among the most painful attacks we may have to face. If we trust in God, these attacks will not hurt us.

Proverbs 11:11

By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but the mouth of the wicked tears it down.

Upright citizens bless a city and make it prosper, but the talk of the wicked tears it apart.

Proverbs 12:6

The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright will deliver them.

The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives.

Proverbs 16:27

A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are like scorching fire.

Scoundrels hunt for scandal; their words are a destructive blaze.

Proverbs 10:11

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

The words of the godly lead to life; evil people cover up their harmful intentions.

Proverbs 10:20-21

The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of understanding.

Words from a good person are valuable (“choice silver”). A lot of poor advice is worth less than a little good advice.

It is easy to get opinions from people who will tell us only what they think will please us, but such advice is not helpful.

Instead we should look for those who will speak the truth, even when it hurts. Think about the people to whom you go for advice. What do you expect to hear from them?

Proverbs 16:21

The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

The wise are known for their understanding, and instruction is appreciated if it's well presented. Discretion is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, but discipline is wasted on fools.

Proverbs 25:12

Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reproof to a listening ear.

Valid criticism is as treasured by the one who heeds it as jewelry made from finest gold.

Chapter 4



The tongue can sustain the weary

Isaiah 50:4

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of disciples, which I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple.

The Sovereign Lord has given his words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will.

Ephesians 4:29

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.

We can grieve the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, and improper use of anger, brawling, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us.

Are you grieving or pleasing God with your attitudes and actions? Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

Proverbs 15:23

A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!

People with tunnel vision, those who are locked into one way of thinking, are likely to miss the right road because they have closed their minds to any new options.

We need the help of those who can enlarge our vision and broaden our perspective. Seek out the advice of those who know you and have a wealth of experience.

Build a network of advisers. Then be open to new ideas and be willing to weigh their suggestions carefully. Your plans will be stronger and more likely to succeed.

1 Samuel 10:27

But certain worthless men said, "How can this one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.

Some men became Saul's constant companions, while others despised him. Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front. At this time, Saul took no notice of those who

seemed to be against him, although later he would become consumed with jealousy (1 Samuel 19:1-3; 1 Samuel 26:17-21).

As you lead, listen to constructive criticism, but don't spend valuable time and energy worrying about those who may oppose you. Instead, focus your attention on those who are ready and willing to help.

Proverbs 10:19

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!

Chapter 5



A wise man speaks with understanding

Proverbs 17:27-28

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

This proverb highlights several benefits of keeping quiet:

- (1) It is the best policy if you have nothing worthwhile to say;
- (2) It allows you the opportunity to listen and learn;
- (3) It gives you something in common with those who are wiser.

Make sure to pause to think and to listen so that when you do speak, you will have something important to say.

Answer not according to folly

Proverbs 26:4

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him.

In some situations, you ought not to even try to answer a fool; for there is no way you can penetrate his or her closed mind. You may, in fact, be stooping to that person's level if you do choose to answer.

Such a fool will abuse you and you will be tempted to abuse him or her in return. There are other situations where your common sense tells you to answer in order to expose the fool's pride and folly.

Amos 5:13

Therefore at such a time the prudent person keeps silent, for it is an evil time.

So those who are wise will keep quiet, for it is an evil time.

Habakkuk 2:20

"But the LORD is in His holy temple Let all the earth be silent before Him."

Idols have no life, no personhood, no power; they are empty chunks of wood or stone. Temples built to idols are equally empty; no one lives there.

But the Lord *is* in his temple. He is real, alive, and powerful. He is truly and fully God. Idolaters command their idols to save them, but we who worship the living God come to him in silent awe, great respect, and reverence.

We acknowledge that God is in control and knows what he is doing. Idols remain silent, because they cannot answer.

The living God, by contrast, speaks through his Word. Approach God reverently and wait silently to hear what he has to say.

Zephaniah 1:7

Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated His guests.

A Day of Judgment and great slaughter occurred during the lifetime of these people when Babylon invaded the land.

The prophet saw these prophecies as future events, but he could not see when or in what order these events would take place.

James 1:19

This you know, my beloved brethren but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;

When we talk too much and listen too little, we communicate to others that we think our ideas are much more important than theirs. James wisely advises us to reverse this process.

Put a mental stopwatch on your conversations and keep track of how much you talk and how much you listen. When people talk with you, do they feel that their viewpoints and ideas have value?

These verses speak of anger that erupts when our egos are bruised—“*I am hurt;*” “*My opinions are not being heard.*” When injustice and sin occur, we *should* become angry because others are being hurt.

But we should not become angry when we fail to win an argument or when we feel offended or neglected. Selfish anger never helps anybody.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Yet faith comes from listening to this message of good news—the Good News about Christ.

Acts 2:40-41

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, and “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

About 3,000 people became new believers when Peter preached the Good News about Christ. These new Christians were united with the other believers, taught by the apostles, and included in the prayer meetings and fellowship.

New believers in Christ need to be in groups where they can learn God’s Word, pray, and mature in the faith.

If you have just begun a relationship with Christ, seek out other believers for fellowship, prayer, and teaching. This is the way to grow.

Acts 28:23-24

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

The things spoken were persuading some, but others would not believe.

Paul used the Old Testament to teach the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of God's promises. The book of Romans, written ten years earlier, reveals the ongoing dialogue that Paul had with the Jews in Rome.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.

Rather than fear our enemies, we are to quietly trust in God as the Lord of all. We must believe that Christ is truly in control of all events. When he rules our thoughts and emotions, we cannot be shaken by anything our enemies may do.

Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer,

gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our life-style, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

1 Peter 2:22-23

He never sinned, and he never deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

We may suffer for many reasons. Some suffering is the direct result of our own sin; some happens because of our foolishness; and some is the result of living in a fallen world. Peter is writing about suffering that comes as a result of doing good. Christ never sinned, and yet he suffered so that we could be set free. When we follow Christ's example and live for others, we too may suffer. Our goal should be to face suffering as he did—with patience, calmness, and confidence that God is in control of the future.

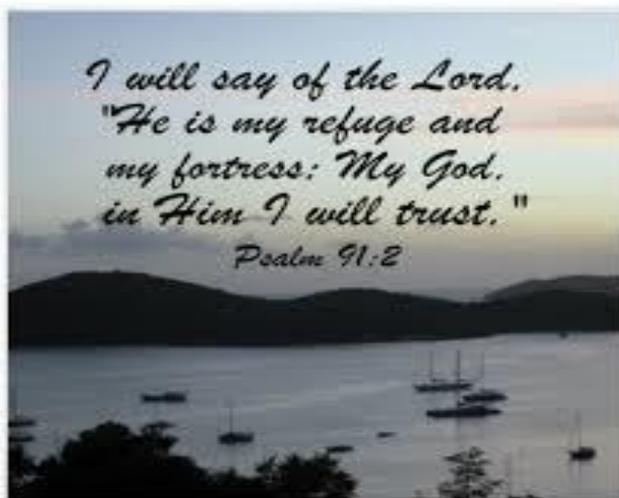
Matthew 26:63

But Jesus kept silent and the high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I demand in the name of the living God that you tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

When Jesus did not rise to his defense, he gave us an example of keeping silent at times, even when we are being accused.

Chapter 6



No answer will amaze the accuser

Mark 14:61

But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

To the first question, Jesus made no reply because it was based on confusing and erroneous evidence. Not answering was wiser than trying to clarify the fabricated accusations.

But if Jesus had refused to answer the second question, it could have been taken as a denial of his mission.

Instead, his answer predicted a powerful role reversal. Sitting on the right hand of power, he would come to judge his accusers, and they would have to answer *his* questions (Psalm 110:1; Rev. 20:11-13).

Matthew 27:14

And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

Jesus' silence fulfilled the words of the prophet (Isaiah 53:7). Pilate was amazed that Jesus didn't try to defend himself.

He recognized the obvious plot against Jesus and wanted to let him go, but Pilate was already under pressure from Rome to keep peace in his territory. The last thing he needed was a rebellion over this quiet and seemingly insignificant man.

Mark 15:5

But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

Why didn't Jesus answer Pilate's questions? It would have been futile to answer, and the time had come to give his life to save the world. Jesus had no reason to try to prolong the trial or save him.

His was the ultimate example of self-assurance and peace, which no ordinary criminal could imitate. Nothing would stop him from completing the work he had come to earth to do (Isaiah 53:7).

Luke 23:9

And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer.

John 19:8-9

Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. Without a spoken word, the accuser has to reason to pronounce judgment.

Matthew 12:34-37

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good?"

For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. "The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment.

Jesus reminds us that what we say reveals what is in our hearts. What kinds of words come from your mouth? That is an indication of what your heart is really like.

You can't solve your heart problem, however, just by cleaning up your speech. You must allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with new attitudes and motives; then your speech will be cleansed at its source.

Psalms 5:9

There is nothing reliable in what they say; their inward part is destruction itself their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

My enemies cannot speak one truthful word. Their deepest desire is to destroy others. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their speech is filled with flattery. Speeches of flattery can only be seen as useless talk with intent to destroy.

Psalms 15:1-5

O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.

He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend

God calls his people to be morally upright, and, in this psalm, he gives us ten standards to determine how we are doing. We live among evil people whose standards and morals are eroding.

Our standards for living should not come from our evil society, but from God.

Words are powerful, and how you use them reflects on your relationship with God. Perhaps nothing so identifies Christians as their ability to

control their speech—speaking the truth, refusing to slander, and keeping oaths (promises). Watch out for what you say.

Matthew 15:10-20

After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?"

Jesus was referring to the Jewish regulations concerning food and drink. This verse could be paraphrased:

"You aren't made unclean by eating no kosher food! It is what you *say* and *think* that makes you unclean!"

This statement offended the Pharisees who were very concerned about what people ate and drank.

Jesus told his disciples to ***leave the Pharisees alone*** because the Pharisees were blind to God's truth.

Anyone who listened to his or her teaching would risk spiritual blindness as well.

Not all religious leaders clearly see God's truth. Make sure that those you listen to and learn from are those with good spiritual eyesight—they teach and follow the principles of Scripture.

Later Peter would be faced with the issue of clean and unclean food. Then he would learn that nothing should be a barrier to proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews).

Mark 7:14-23

After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

Do we worry more about what is in our diets than what is in our hearts and minds? As they interpreted the dietary laws (Leviticus 11), the Jews believed they could be clean before God because of what they refused to eat.

But Jesus pointed out that sin actually begins in the attitudes and intentions of the inner person.

Jesus did not degrade the law, but he paved the way for the change made clear in Acts 10:9-29 when God removed the cultural restrictions regarding food.

We are not pure because of outward acts—we become pure on the inside as Christ renews our minds and transforms us into his image.

An evil action begins with a single thought.

Allowing our minds to dwell on lust, envy, hatred, or revenge will lead to sin. Don't defile yourself by focusing on evil. Instead, follow Paul's advice in Phil. 4:8 and think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

The spoken word is powerful, but must be used at the right time and spoken in love. Unless you care for others, even as Christ cares for us, it is better not to speak at all.

My Life Quest

By Harold Bollinger

The advisors came.

Some spoke babble, some spoke wisdom.

Some spoke in demeaning tones.

Some spoke in care and love.

To whom shall I listen?

Shall I listen to gossip and demeaning others?

Are they bragging or manipulating?

Is their advice true or is it false?

Are they exaggerating, complaining or lying?

Does their advice gender strife?

I must first tune my ear to the one true source.

The Holy Spirit, as is given in the Word of God.

With care, love and understanding

Will I hear, and will I speak.

For in no other way will I show God's love.

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible.* Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**