



worldoutreach
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES TWO

MODULE TWO: MANAGING OUR TONGUE (WORDS)



Outline Session 1 - 2

1. Managing our tongue (words) (Part 1)
2. Managing our tongue (words) (Part 2)

SESSION ONE: MANAGING OUR TONGUE (PART ONE)

Paul exhorted Timothy to ‘...set an example for the believers in **speech...**’ (1 Timothy 4:12).

One of the ways a leader leads is through their words. A leader’s words carry great weight; therefore, a leader needs to exercise rigorous *self-control* over their tongue (words). Self-control over the tongue comes from *within* – from the inside out.

While the Bible says a lot about words, especially in the Proverbs (13:3; 21:23), there are two passages that stand out in particular: James 3:2-12 and Matthew 12:33-37 (cf. 15:17-20).

Here is a quick summary of the teaching of Scripture, in regard to our tongue, with emphasis on Jesus and James.

1. Our words can either be used for good or bad (Proverbs 18:21)

James wrote how our tongue, though a relatively small part of our body, has disproportionate power (3:5).

There are many ways in which we can use our words destructively: backbiting (Psalm 15:3; Leviticus 19:16; 2 Timothy 3:3); gossiping (Proverbs 11:13); criticising (Numbers 12:1-2); judging (Matthew 7:1; 1 Corinthians 4:5); boasting (Proverbs 18:12; 2 Timothy 3:3); abusing (2 Timothy 3:3); and lying (Colossians 3:9; Genesis 27:24).

Paul stressed to the Ephesians not to ‘...let any unwholesome words come out of your mouths, but only what is **helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen**’ (Ephesians 4:29).

There are many ways in which we can biblically use our words for good: spiritual gifts (especially prophecy, 1 Corinthians 14:3); encouragement (Romans 14:19; 15:2; Ephesians 4:12, 29; 1 Thessalonians 5:11); prayer (James 5:13-18); training our children in godly living (Deuteronomy 6:7); praise (Psalm 145:11); witnessing about Jesus (Luke 24:35); preaching (Acts 2:37); and comforting others (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

2. Our words reveal (unmask, unveil) what is within our heart

(Matthew 12:33-35; cf. 15:17-20; James 3:9-12)

Our speech is a barometer of our spirituality because it, above all else, reveals the true state and substance of our heart. In Moo’s words, ‘The person who is double and inconsistent with regard to the things of God in his heart will be double and inconsistent in speech...Christians who have been transformed by the Spirit of God should manifest the wholeness and purity of the heart in consistency and purity of speech.’



SESSION TWO: MANAGING OUR TONGUE (PART TWO)

3. Our words will be judged

A number of passages show that each of us are accountable for our words (Matthew 12:36-37 & Romans 14:10-12). There is a day of accountability and reckoning when we shall stand before the 'judgment seat of Christ' (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day, we will answer for every unredeemed, careless, thoughtless, meaningless, senseless, worthless and fruitless word we have spoken. According to Jesus' words in Matthew 12:36-37, our words become the basis of our own judgment. We set the standard for ourselves. The judgment will reveal the true effect of our tongue.

4. Scripture is clear in its call to exercise 'self-control' over our tongues

(James 3:2-4; cf. Colossians 3:8; Proverbs 13:3; James 1:19)

The implication and application of James 3:2-4 is that the degree of self-control we have over our tongue is representative of the degree of self-control we have over all our passions, desires and drives. When the tongue is not restrained, small though it is, the rest of the body is likely to be uncontrolled and undisciplined also. But if we can control the tongue, we have the *potential* to control every other passion, desire and drive. The control of the tongue is more than an evidence of spiritual maturity; it is a means to it.

Scriptural ideas for how we can practically exercise self-control over our tongues?

Repent and reject old ways of speaking (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:5, 8 & 9)

Firstly, we need to identify any pre-Christian habits and patterns of speech; that is, any ways of speaking that are residue from our old life before we knew Jesus. Paul tells us that they are part of our old nature and, as such, need to be 'put off' (Ephesians 4:22).

Yield our tongue to the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13)

Be slow to speak (James 1:19)

In 1:19 of his epistle, James instructed us to be '*...quick to listen' but 'slow to speak...'* In other words, we must think before we speak. Here are some practical principles from Scripture in this vein:

- Use words with restraint (Proverbs 17:27);
- Guard our lips (Proverbs 13:3; cf. 21:23);
- Hold our tongue (Proverbs 10:19);
- Keep a tight rein on our tongue (James 1:26).

Follow Jesus' example (1 Peter 2:21-23)

