

Church of God

Sunday School



What Did
You Say?

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP #2 – AN UNCONTROLLED TONGUE

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** The tongue is powerful (Proverbs 6:2; Proverbs 18:21; James 3:2-10).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** There is a danger in excessive talking (Proverbs 10:8, 19; Ecclesiastes 5:3; Ecclesiastes 10:14).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Avoid gossip and talebearing (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 20:19; Psalm 50:19-20).
- ❑ **Thursday:** There is wisdom in being slow to speak (Proverbs 17:27; Proverbs 21:23; James 1:19).
- ❑ **Friday:** Words come from the heart (Matthew 12:34-37; Matthew 15:18-19; Luke 6:45).
- ❑ **Saturday:** How to have a controlled tongue (Psalm 141:3; Philippians 4:8; Titus 3:1-2).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."* —Psalm 19:14

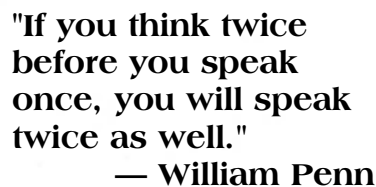
The Power of Words

Years ago a study was conducted by the University of Arizona to find out how many words people speak daily. The average was 16,000 words per day. (One man was found to be speaking up to 47,000 words per day!) What do those 16,000 words consist of? How do those words affect others? An old story, called *Feathers in the Wind*, tells about a woman who had a terrible problem with gossiping. Once, after discovering she had spread a story that was not true, she went to her pastor and asked for help. He told her to take a feather pillow and cut it open. When she did this, the feathers blew all over the room and out an open window. "Now pick up all the feathers," her pastor told her. "That is impossible!" the woman cried. "So it is with words," her pastor said, "once spoken they cannot be taken back."

In the Bible, James compared the tongue to "a fire" (James 3:6). Just as an unattended fire can burn down a forest, so a careless word can destroy reputations, friendships, and marriages. Just as a small rudder turns a very large ship and a small rider can turn a large, strong horse, just a few thoughtlessly spoken words could change the entire direction of someone's life. Although we might not realize the tremendous power of words, the devil does, and he uses this tool to destroy, discourage, and deceive many people.

Some Tactics of the Devil

What are some of the ways the devil works through an uncontrolled tongue? Gossip, slander, disrespect, and telling lies about others are some of the obvious ways, and the Christian needs to be careful in these areas. However, there are other tactics the devil uses that are not as apparent. Proverbs 10:19 warns, "When there are many words, transgression and offense are unavoidable . . ." (AMP). Where there is excessive talking, there is a danger of saying something you should not say. The rest of the verse describes one who is wise: "he who controls his lips and keeps thoughtful silence is wise" (AMP). There is an old saying, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." James 1:19 gives similar advice, saying that we should be "swift to hear, [and] slow to speak." Some people talk too much about themselves, boasting of their accomplishments or abilities. Proverbs 27:2 gives this good advice: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."



**"If you think twice
before you speak
once, you will speak
twice as well."
— William Penn**

The Source of Our Words

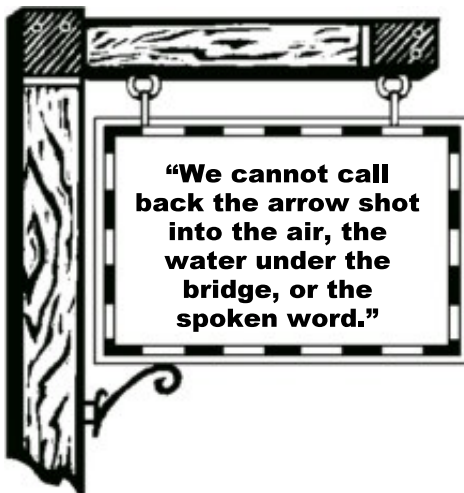
It is often easy to excuse an uncontrolled tongue, saying such things as: "I didn't mean to say that" or "You misunderstood me" or even "The devil made me do it." While it is possible to occasionally misspeak, it is important to realize that words come from the heart. One Christian evangelist said, "The heart is the factory . . . and the tongue is the showcase of the heart" (Leonard Ravenhill). Words reveal what is in the heart. What you think about often will come out through your words. If there is bitterness, hatred, or anger in your heart toward others, you might be able to hide it for a while, but eventually your words will betray you. James 3:8 says that "the tongue can no man tame." A tongue that is out of control is a sign of a heart that needs God's help. This dangerous tool of the devil is able to work because of "evil thoughts" (Matthew 15:18-19). Whether you speak "good" words or "evil" words depends on "the abundance [the overflow] of the heart" (Luke 6:45).

If you find that your words are hurtful, bitter, or angry, it is time to examine your heart. Where are these words coming from? Has someone hurt you? Did someone cheat you or tell lies about you? Have you been made fun of or rejected? Does it seem like others always have better things, more money, or an easier life than you do? These things can produce the wrong feelings in your heart. What can you do about it? If you do nothing, these feelings will take root in your heart and soon become a part of you. It is vital that you quickly identify those thoughts and ask for God's help in removing them. Thoughts that are allowed to remain soon become words. Proverbs 23:7 shows that what you allow yourself to think on will define who you are. "What is down in the well comes up in the bucket" (old proverb).

The Power of Words Rightly Spoken

Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Words "fitly spoken" are used carefully, thoughtfully, and at the right time. They are beautiful and often rare. Why is that? Because it is easier to say the first thing that comes to your mind. However, the first thought that comes to mind is not always the kindest thought (the devil will make sure of that). In the original Hebrew, "a word fitly spoken" means "a word spoken on his wheels." In ancient culture, carts did not have wheels. They were pulled along by two long poles. This was hard work, and it often left deep ruts in the ground. In time wheels were added—a significant improvement. "Each of your words should be like a vehicle on easy-going wheels, so smooth and courteous that it would produce no jar or shock to either speaker or hearer; nor . . . leave a painful rut behind in the memory" (*The Biblical Illustrator*).

A children's rhyme that says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me," is sadly untrue. However, just as words have great power to do harm, words also have the ability to do great good. You can combat the tool of the devil (an uncontrolled tongue) with God's help and develop a controlled tongue, one that encourages, comforts, and positively influences others. Kind, positive words have a greater effect than we will ever know. Not only can they brighten someone's day, they are often contagious. You can encourage others to use words "fitly spoken" as well. The best result is that your kind, thoughtful words can be a light to people who are unsaved, a witness of a better way of living.



How to Have a Controlled Tongue

Ask for God's Help: *"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3).*

Think on Good Things: *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).*

Ask for Forgiveness When Necessary: *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16a).*

Speak Encouraging Words Often: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).*



1. How are words like feathers? _____

2. How is the tongue like a fire? _____

3. What are some things carelessly spoken words are compared to in the lesson? _____

4. How does the devil work through an uncontrolled tongue? _____

5. How can excessive talking be a problem for the Christian? _____

6. What do you think this quote means: "The heart is the factory . . . and the tongue is the showcase of the heart" (Leonard Ravenhill)? _____

7. What are words "fitly spoken"? _____

8. Do you agree that the rhyme "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me" is untrue? Why or why not? _____

9. What are some examples of a controlled tongue? _____

10. What are some things you can do to have a controlled tongue? _____

Tongue Types

Match the Scriptures
to the
Tongue Description

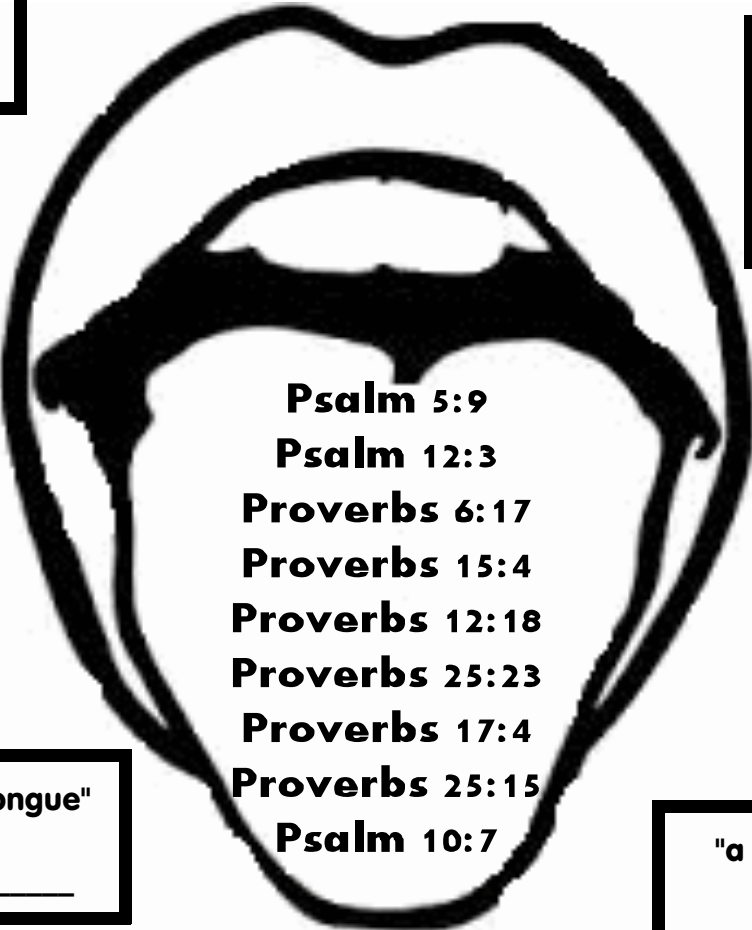
"they flatter with their tongue"

"under his tongue is
mischief and vanity"

"a lying tongue" _____

"a soft
tongue"

"the tongue
that speaketh
proud things"



"the tongue
of the wise
is health"

"a backbiting
tongue"

"a wholesome tongue"

"a naughty tongue"

Psalm 5:9
Psalm 12:3
Proverbs 6:17
Proverbs 15:4
Proverbs 12:18
Proverbs 25:23
Proverbs 17:4
Proverbs 25:15
Psalm 10:7