



# Controlling the Tongue

One of the most powerful forces at work in our world today, for good or evil, is not the power of nuclear energy, but the power of the tongue. The words we use have great power to create, inspire, bring peace to our world, but they also have great power to hurt, divide and even bring us to a place of hate and war. How we use our tongues, use

the words we say, have a real impact on the people around us. For a Christian how we use our words is very important. The Bible

makes it clear that God expects us to place both our thought life and the words we use under the Lordship / control of Jesus. This means taking responsibility for the words we use and making sure we take every thought / word captive that can be used to hurt or divide. Words submitted to Jesus have a great power to heal, build up and create Kingdom opportunities for all of us!!

**Discuss** - (In group / or small groups)

**Q1)** Why do you think it is hard to control the words we say?

**Q2)** What damage do you think words can do to a person / or a church if used wrongly?

**Q3)** What do you think we can do to learn to “tame the tongue“?

So what does the Bible tell us about using our tongue and how to control it?

## The Tongue is double-minded!!

In the book of James we are given a clear description of the tongue and its power. In chapter 3, James teaches us that although the tongue is a very small part of the body, it's use, directs the course of a person's life. James uses the illustrations of a great ship directed by a small rudder and a great forest fire started by a small spark, to highlight how the power of the small object has great affect to stir and destroy. The idea of double - mindedness is found in the idea that one moment we can be praising God and speaking words of praise and worship, yet the very next we can be cursing and abusing our fellow man. As people who belong to Jesus this **should not** be the case. There is no justification for a Christian to slander, gossip, use hateful words towards other people. We may find reasons to justify this verbal behaviour to ourselves or even other Christians, BUT we cannot justify this sort of behaviour before God. The double-minded tongue is one of those destructive forces in the church which undermines trust, unity and love . To say one thing in front of someone and something else behind their back is unacceptable.

James 1 v 26, James 3 v 3 - 12

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## Be Honest with yourself and God!!

The Bible tells us the root of gossip, slander and hateful words comes out of the overflow of our hearts. Therefore it is possible to recognise the state of our hearts by monitoring the words that we use in our daily living. If we are using negative words and moaning all the time - this says something about our heart and it's position before God. If we are hateful or unforgiving, this will be seen in the words we use against someone. The start of learning to tame the tongue is to be willing to recognise what the condition of our heart and faith is like!! As we are honest with ourselves and confess to the Lord, He is willing to draw out of us the hurt, bitterness, or pride that causes us to put others down or hurt them with our words. But the starting point is a desire to be honest. It may be that you ask someone you respect as honest, to monitor the words you use and tell you after a week or two what they have found!! Luke 6 v 43 -45

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## Use words that build people up – not pull people down!!

The focus of the way a Christian uses words is on honesty and the desire to build people up. This means we let go of patterns of obscenity and slander - we let go of falsehood and foolish talk and we use our words to encourage, build up, words of goodness, righteousness and truth. The words a Christian uses should promote unity and peace within the fellowship even when we have to confront people. Ephesians 4 v 25 - 5 v 21

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## So what about when someone hurts us?

There are times when what people say hurts us or we disagree with it. In situations like this we are called by the word of God, not to gossip about them, but go to the person directly and share in love our concern. If they respond in a hostile way - we then are called to involve another person to arbitrate between us and the person concerned. If this fails then we are called to get the wider church involved. If someone hurts us, we are called to forgive them from our hearts and not to hold bitterness against them. As you can see if we follow this advice there is no room for gossip or slander.

Scripture makes it clear gossip and slander are sins in the eyes of God, sins that undermine and destroy relationships. We need to use self control and to separate ourselves from both the desire to gossip and other people who gossip.

