

9. Is Your Tongue a Weapon?

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Such an untrue saying. Words can hurt deeply. The tongue can be a powerful weapon.

People can have a good heart and really care for others, but still cause a lot of grief with their tongue. It doesn't matter if they do all kinds of good works; if they can't control what they say, trouble will surely come their way and someone will get hurt.

Not to say we should never speak up when necessary. Jesus spoke very harshly about the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. But He spoke as a teacher and out of love (**Scriptures 1. – Jesus Spoke Harshly**).

There are times when it is proper to say something that may not be well received. Setting boundaries sometimes hurts people's feelings, but we must do it. You may be accused of not forgiving or not being a good Christian when you set boundaries, but don't listen to that. Let Jesus lead you when setting the needed boundaries in your relationships.

Also, we are taught in the Bible that we should keep each other in check. If someone is doing something that is separating them from God, we should speak up (**Scriptures 2. – Keep Each Other in Check**).

The tongue is spoken of many times in the Holy Bible (**Scriptures 3 – The Tongue**). James explains that the tongue is like the rudder of a boat. Even though the rudder is a small part of the boat, it controls which way the boat will go. Such is the tongue. It is a small part of our body, but can cause so much grief and trouble.

The Bible also talks about deceit and lying. That may be the worst thing that can come out of our mouths. Criticism and hurtful words are bad enough, but deceit is totally unacceptable. Once I know a person is prone to lying, I will never believe a word that person says again. Dishonesty brings distrust.

I used to be pretty outspoken and angry all the time. But since I've come to know Jesus, I've gotten better. The Lord has helped me be more patient and to see things differently. He has also helped me with setting boundaries and not allowing others to cause harm.

If people get angry at you for being too outspoken, let Jesus help you with that. I know it's not easy to change the way you talk, but with God's help, you can do it! Living a Christian life changes the way you think, which in turn changes the way you express your thoughts.

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Scriptures 1. Jesus Spoke Harshly

Matthew 23:1-4 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

Matthew 23:13-33 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Luke 16:14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.”

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Scriptures 2. Keep Each Other in Check

Matthew 18:15-18 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Scriptures 3. The Tongue

Proverbs 15:1-4 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

Psalms 50:19 You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.

Psalms 64:3 They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim cruel words like deadly arrows.

Psalms 37:30 The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.

James 1:26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

James 3:4-12 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

1 Peter 3:9-10 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.