

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Seventeen - "Why is it important to guard our mouths?"

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Words are powerful. God spoke creation into existence with His words.
- Both negative and positive words can have lasting impact on our brains and our health.
- The Bible calls our tongues full of deadly poison, capable of bringing life or death.
- On judgement day, every person needs to give an account of every idle word they have spoken or thought.
- The Bible gives many guidelines of how we should or should not use our words (with examples).
- As believers, we need to honour God with the way we use our words.

Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/PIQdbNxcdmo>

Transcript

Welcome to lesson 17 of Love the Lord where we look at the power of our words and how we should guard our mouths.

Let us begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click pause at any point if you need more time.

First, let's thank God for His perfect character and His perfect will for us.

Next, please tell Him about the things that have been stressful and ask for His help and guidance.

Let us put down our burdens of sin and confess the ways we have sinned against God and against others, and ask for His forgiveness.

Now, please confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, “In Jesus’ name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen.”

Let's begin the lesson for today. Why is it important to consider our words before we speak?

Words are powerful. God spoke our entire creation into existence. Without God speaking, nothing would exist.

Psalm 33:6 The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. (NLT)

God doesn't talk meaninglessly. Every word He speaks is intentional, powerful and accomplishes His purposes. Similarly, our words can have long-lasting consequences too.

Isaiah 55:11 It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. (NLT)

With life-giving words, we can build someone up. With deadly cutting words, we can destroy them. We can ruin reputations, families, relationships, and even international affairs. It is not surprising that the Bible says that our words have the power of life or death.

Proverbs 18:21 The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences. (NLT)

The life-giving power of our words extends even to our physical bodies. This is because many parts of our brain that process language also control major organs and biological systems of our bodies.

Proverbs 4:20-22 My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. (NLT)

Studies of human brains show that negative words tend to release stress-producing hormones and neurotransmitters. These can immediately interrupt the normal functioning of our brains and have a negative effect on the flow of chemicals that support our immune system. The more we meditate on negative words, the more we compromise our immune systems and physical health as well as the key structures in our brains that regulate logic, reason, memory, emotions, and communication.

On the other hand, positive words such as “love”, “peace”, and “loving kindness” increase cognitive reasoning and activate motivational centres of our brains. Hearing kind and loving words also has a positive impact on our immune systems and leads to longer, healthier lives.

To shield us from mis-using our mouths, God's Word tells us to fix our thoughts on whatever is true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

Philippians 4:8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (NLT)

Kind words are healthy for the physical body. How we use our words also have implications for our eternities.

Proverbs 16:24 Kind words are like honey —sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. (NLT)

Did you know we must all give an account for every idle word we speak? The words we say on earth will either acquit us or condemn us on Judgement Day. One day, God will re-play all the words we have ever spoken or thought in our hearts and ask us to give an account for every one of them. How will we feel then?

Matthew 12:36-37 And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.” (NLT)

God hears everything we say and He has a record of whether we honour or dishonour His name. It's hard to imagine that our thoughts and words can have such serious spiritual consequences, especially when most times, we don't think twice about what we are really saying — whether by what we say implicitly or explicitly.

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name. (NLT)

But it is imperative that we do because the hearts of the godly think carefully before speaking.

Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words. (NLT)

We all need to set a guard over our mouths so that we don't sin against God and against others, because we simply cannot “take our words back” once they have left the doors of our lips.

Psalms 141:3 Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips! (ESV)

When we keep our tongues from speaking evil, God's Word also shows us that we will enjoy life and see many happy days.

1 Peter 3:10 For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. (NLT)

But when we use our words in defiling ways, with obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes, we are told that there will be no inheritance in heaven for us.

Ephesians 5:4-5 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God... (NLT)

This is because lying words and slander not only defile others but defile ourselves spiritually too.

Matthew 15:18-19 But the words you speak come from the heart—that's what defiles you. For from the heart come evil thoughts, ... lying, and slander. (NLT)

We cannot sing worship songs and praise God at the same time as we curse, slander, and condemn other people with the same mouth. This would make us hypocritical.

James 3:9-10 Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely... this is not right! (NLT)

Foul and abusive language grieves the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:29-30 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live... (NLT)

To God, such talk smells bad and foul, like the stench from an open grave. Have you ever been confronted with the stench of rotting flesh or an open sewer? This is what our coarse talk and cursing smells like to God.

Romans 3:13-14 "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies." "Snake venom drips from their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." (NLT)

James chapter 1 verse 26 warns us that anyone who cannot control their tongue is only fooling themselves and their religion is worthless.

James 1:26 If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. (NLT)

This means that even when people insult us, we will choose not to retaliate with insults but to pay them back with a blessing. When we do this, God will bless us because we are following Jesus' example.

1 Peter 3:9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. (NLT)

Jesus did not retaliate when He was insulted or threaten revenge when He suffered. Instead, He entrusted all things to God the Father, who always judges fairly.

1 Peter 2:23 He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. (NLT)

God delights in pure words and He blesses us when we reflect His holy, kind, and compassionate nature, but not when we join other sinners in speaking words with evil plans and evil intentions.

Proverbs 15:26 The Lord detests evil plans, but he delights in pure words. (NLT)

As followers of Jesus Christ, our words are meant to be like a refreshing fountain that revives people and brings them to life.

Proverbs 10:11 The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain; the words of the wicked conceal violent intentions. (NLT)

God loves us too much to leave us guessing how we are to use our words. We need His help to tame our tongues, which are restless and evil, full of potentially deadly poison.

James 3:8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. (NLT)

Thoughtless words can cut into people and wound them like sword thrusts. Brain research has shown that our brain processes words of rejection the same way it processes physical injury. What we say can have a much deeper impact than we realise — emotionally and even physically. It is an area that we certainly need God's help in, to be renewed in.

Proverbs 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (ESV)

For today's lesson, we have compiled some guidelines from the Bible that we hope will be useful to you. We will begin with how we should use our words in relation to one another, so that our words are like a life-giving fountain.

One, we should always speak the truth with love. This means that we should put a guard over our mouths when we are upset and wait until we can speak with kindness, patience, and respect.

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. (NLT)

Two, we are to share about our faith in Jesus with gentleness and respect, not with aggression, condemnation, or fear-mongering.

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, (NIV)

Three, we should always choose to use words that are gracious and kind, not words that sound accusing or manipulative.

Colossians 4:6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. (NLT)

Four, we should use our words to encourage and build others up, not tear them down.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (NLT)

Five, we ought to bring God's comforting words to the hurting and pray for them.

2 Corinthians 1:4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. (NLT)

Six, we should not hesitate to warn those who are idle and disruptive, for they are only inviting God's judgement upon themselves.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (NIV)

Seven, we should ensure that whatever we say will always bring God glory, and not disgrace His name.

Romans 6:13 ... So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. (NLT)

The Bible also has many warnings about what we should not do with our words. We all need to learn to tame our tongues and not allow our mouths to spit out deadly poison. Let's start.

One, we should never break someone's confidence and go around telling others what they have confided in us about. This, unfortunately, can happen in Christian circles when we ask others to pray for someone's personal issues without first checking for their permission to share. This does not honour our brothers or sisters in Christ and it is something we should not do. If we feel the need to ask for help for someone, we can always ensure that their identity is completely anonymous before we share anything.

Proverbs 11:13 A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence. (NLT)

Two, we should not speak evil against other people by criticising and judging them. We should seek to help others, not condemn them. When we condemn others, God will condemn us too.

James 4:11 Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you. (NLT)

Three, we ought to decide that all gossip stops with us. Slander and gossip are like infectious diseases that God-fearing believers will not spread to others, no matter what.

Leviticus 19:16 "Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people. "Do not stand idly by when your neighbor's life is threatened. I am the Lord. (NLT)

Four, we will not pass on false rumours either. There is a lot of fake news nowadays and the wise will not be a promotional agent for lies.

Exodus 23:1 "You must not pass along false rumors. You must not cooperate with evil people by lying on the witness stand. (NLT)

Five, we will refrain from using brash, forceful words because harsh words can cut deeply and cause tempers to flare.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. (NLT)

Six, we should never use our mouths to curse people or condemn them, even those who persecute us or treat us poorly. We please God when we bless them instead.

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. (NLT)

Seven, we will avoid answering arguments from foolish people because this will only draw us into meaningless debates.

Proverbs 26:4 Don't answer the foolish arguments of fools, or you will become as foolish as they are. (NLT)

Eight, we will never use foul or abusive language as this only glorifies Satan. When we are renewed by the Holy Spirit, we will find it repulsive to even think of such words.

Ephesians 4:29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (NLT)

Nine, we need to be careful not to use our words to pick fights and quarrels or cause divisions. We are to bless and live in peace with everyone, even those who consider themselves our enemies.

Titus 3:2 They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone. (NLT)

Ten, we should avoid flattering someone with the hope of gaining their favour. This is a form of manipulation. We should not offend other people, but neither should we shower them with false flattery. We can trust God to grant us favour with the right people.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates its victims, and flattering words cause ruin. (NLT)

Eleven, we would not cover up our mistakes or sweep something aside by saying something like, "Oh, I was only joking," as this does not honour others. Rather, a confession or an apology is what will bring God glory.

Proverbs 26:18-19 Just as damaging as a madman shooting a deadly weapon is someone who lies to a friend and then says, "I was only joking." (NLT)

Twelve, we need to be careful not to swear any oath or make any promises that we cannot keep.

James 5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. (ESV)

As we look at this list of what we should not do with the words, we will notice that these are things that we do not want others to do to us too.

At the same time, God also tells us what He does not want us to do to Him.

One, God gives us a very serious warning to never blaspheme the Holy Spirit. This is a sin that will never be forgiven. To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to call Him evil, curse Him, or attribute His works to Satan.

Luke 12:10 Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. (NLT)

Two, we should not use the name of God in vain. Too many people use the name of Jesus Christ casually nowadays, almost like a curse word in exclamation marks. Or we may hear, “oh my god” without understanding what we are doing. We should always honour the name of our most high and holy God.

Deuteronomy 5:11 “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. (NLT)

Three, we should not scoff or mock spiritual beings just because we cannot see them.

Jude 1:8 In the same way, these people—who claim authority from their dreams—live immoral lives, defy authority, and scoff at supernatural beings. (NLT)

Thankfully, all the things on this list are not too difficult to avoid.

But if you do feel convicted about how you might have mis-used your words in the past, thank God that we can always ask Him for His forgiveness and invite the Holy Spirit to cleanse us spiritually. We certainly would like to also re-dedicate our mouths to God to use for His glory

Here is a quick summary of 14 ways we can sin with our words for you to refer to. Please click pause here and take as much time as you need, as you go to your Heavenly Father and ask for His cleansing and for His renewal.

1. Break confidences
2. Speak evil against others
3. Spread slanderous gossip
4. Pass along false rumours
5. Use harsh words
6. Curse others
7. Quarrel with others
8. Use foul or abusive language
9. Use false flattery
10. Say “just joking” to cover lies

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11. Swear an oath
 12. Misuse God's name
 13. Scoff at spiritual beings
 14. Cause divisions

Welcome back.

God always welcomes our prayers and thoughts when we seek to honour Him. Here are some reminders on how we can communicate and relate with Him with our words.

Before we approach God to stand in His presence, we should remember to repent of any sins that we have been hanging on to that grieve the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:19-20 Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, (NLT)

Then we will delight God when we sing praises to Him from pure hearts.

Psalms 59:16-17 But as for me, I will sing about your power. Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress. O my Strength, to you I sing praises... (NLT)

And thank Him no matter what circumstance we may be in, because we know He has a higher plan that will work all things out for the best.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (NLT)

Nonetheless, we should not hesitate to pour out our complaints and tell Him all about our troubles as we would with our most trusted and faithful Friend. God will comfort and strengthen us.

Psalms 142:1-2 I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord's mercy. I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. (NLT)

He will also generously guide us when we ask Him for wisdom.

James 1:5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (NLT)

He will even teach us what to say and when to say it.

Luke 12:11-12 ... don't worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said." (NLT)

This may include the words that are needed to cast out demons from the afflicted in Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit may also inspire some of us to speak in tongues.

Mark 16:17 These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. (NLT)

God will always give us victory over Satan, our accuser, in Jesus' name and give us a testimony worth sharing that will bring Him glory.

Revelation 12:10-11 ... For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth— the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony... (NLT)

So we can always boldly and confidently tell others about Jesus.

Romans 10:14 But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? (NLT)

Praise God that the Bible gives us the wisdom we need to live wisely and escape from trouble and the traps of our own words.

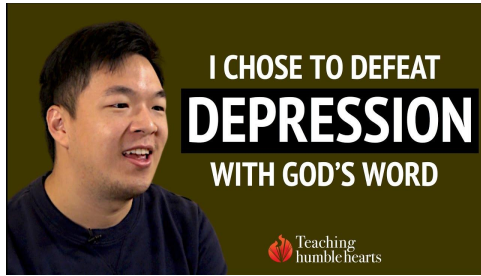
Proverbs 12:13 The wicked are trapped by their own words, but the godly escape such trouble. (NLT)

We have now come to the end of today's lesson. Here are two reflection questions for you to prepare answers to before your small group meeting. There is also a testimony to watch. We pray that you'll be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. What are some thoughtless "throw-away lines" that people in your culture use?
2. Have you ever sinned by keeping silent and not speaking up?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes