

PROGRAM 45 TEASER

Such a tiny muscle. And like all muscles, it needs exercise. Fact is, it gets more exercise than any other part of our bodies. Yes, our tongues. But that tiny tongue is such a giant factor in each of our lives. That's because my tongue—and yours—usually speaks what is in our minds and hearts. You know, garbage in, garbage out. Or good things in, goodness out. God says no one can tame the tongue. It takes His Spirit to turn our tongues from being uncontrolled fires that hurt others—or tools to inspire those around us. Don't miss this message. *The Tongue: Uncontrolled Fire? Or Tool To Inspire.* It really will be *More Than Talk!*

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THE TONGUE: UNCONTROLLED FIRE? OR TOOL TO INSPIRE?

Page 1 Tiny muscle—giant factor

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” Psalm 19:14

Two words stand out in our scripture for today: "mouth" and "heart." Picture the two with a pipe connecting them to each other - thus a constant flow from heart to mouth. God's Word repeats often the fact that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks - whether it be abundant evil that spills through the lips to wound others or abundant purity and love that come forth to soothe and heal others.

Our hearts and minds are like computers, and our wills act as programmers. Garbage in, garbage out! Or godliness in, godliness out! We really determine what comes from our mouth by what we allow to settle in our hearts. And since "as he thinks in his heart so is he", the Psalmist's cry must be my own. Knowing he is constantly in the Lord's sight, the One who is his strength and redeemer, David knows his words will be weighed and his heart searched - and he asks that both be made acceptable to God.

How incredible that such a tiny body part - the tongue - can be such a giant factor in each life. Like all muscles, it must be used, and God's Book of "tongue exercises" calls for praising Him often and preaching the gospel in love to others. If we fill our minds and hearts with the Word of God and seek to do only the will of God, our tongues become tools in the hand of God. But if our heart is full of self, then selfish, ugly, hurtful words will burst out - or leak out - no matter how outwardly righteous we pretend to be. An Indian proverb says, "The best way to kill a cobra is in its egg." The best way to kill an uncontrollable tongue is to go to the "egg of the matter" - the heart. Let's invite the Holy Spirit to do just that!

My prayer: "Teach me, my Father, the connection between my heart and my mouth. I want my heart so full of You that only Your gracious words can come forth through the doors of my lips."

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Page 2 Life's toughest lesson

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1

Though some might not view this verse as a "promise", I promise you that if you learn when to give the "soft answer," you will save yourself from hard troubles. That's because I'm still learning - the hard way - that a loose tongue leads to a tight place in our relationship with others be they mate, family, neighbors, employees, employer, etc. Wrath is a fire, but a gentle answer is like rain. Sounds good, huh? But it's not easy to answer softly, is it? Especially when the other person is spitting out mean, spiteful, accusatory and angry words - and you believe you are in the right. Or, even if you're in the wrong and deserving of blame, it's hard not to match verbal insults one toward another.

But that isn't the way of the Cross. God's love will not allow us to win the point but lose the person. The devil and the flesh will afford us many opportunities to give snappy retorts rather than soft answers. That's why someone wisely said, "Talk is cheap because the supply is greater than the demand." But the Holy Spirit will teach us the avenues and the answers of love. Like the man who moved to a new home and discovered that his neighbor had a mean, ugly dog who barked viciously every time the man passed by. This man was as wise with dogs as he was with people. He did not yell or take a stick or even complain to the dog's owner. Instead, each time he passed by he talked softly to the dog and gave it a tasty treat. Not many days later, the canine turned from snarling lips to wagging tail, as the two became great friends. So rather than bite, fight or spite, learn to practice the soft answer and you may turn an enemy into a friend.

My prayer: "Lord Jesus, teach me the most difficult lesson in life - how to control my tongue in situations that are beyond my control."

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Page 3 Roses in words beat roses on graves

“The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, That I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned.” Isaiah 50:4

Note two key phrases in today's word from the Lord that speak of both the tongue and the ear of "the learned." In today's world of formal education, it's easy to equate "learned" with the man or woman with lots of letters behind their names. However, the education this verse unfolds is from the school of the Spirit of God. It is the Lord Himself who desires to touch our tongues and ears so that we can be His messengers of hope to weary and hopeless people all around us.

God can take the most humble and simple saint and turn him/her into one of heaven's "learned ones." Didn't Jesus say to the weary and heavy-laden to yoke up with Him and, as He said, "learn of me"? Remember how the "unlearned and ignorant" (by the world's standards) apostles stunned the merely "head-educated" leaders in Israel with a knowledge and power that could only be because "they had been with Jesus"? (Acts 4:13,14)

Since "out of the heart the mouth speaks," God wants to fill you with so much of His love that you become aware of any weary soul in your midst and speak just the right words for just the right season. You'll give "roses in words" to bless others in life rather than put roses that wilt on graves when it's too late. Let Jesus awaken you morning by morning and offer Him your spiritual ears to hear what He has to say. He will then give you an ear to hear the sigh of the weary and worn, and a tongue that will give the words that refresh.

My prayer: "My Father, I crave the education that can only come through long hours spent with You. Give me a discerning heart to identify the weary - in my home and in my world - that I might offer a word of refreshing in their season of weariness."

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Page 4 Useless chatter versus things that matter

“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:37

What is it that gets us in more trouble than anything else? On the other hand, what is it that can make us an instant blessing to others? The answer, of course, is our mouth where our tongue resides and from which flow words. A harsh, hurtful word can leave scars that no amount of "I'm sorry's" can erase. Timely, well-chosen words can lift the lowest spirit and bring a sense of worth to any heart; even few words like "God bless you," "I'm praying for you," "I love you," "You're special to God and to me," etc.

Jesus was full of gracious words. That's because His heart was full of goodness and love. In our scriptural context today, He speaks of a coming judgment that will justify or condemn us by the words we speak. Evil words come from the evil treasure hidden in hearts opposed to God, while good words come from the good treasure of a heart in love with the Lord.

But then Jesus really touches a nerve when He goes beyond the terms "good" and "evil" concerning the words that pour from our mouths. He speaks of the "idle word" (v 36) which the Amplified Bible describes this way: "...men will have to give account for every idle (inoperative, non- working) word they speak." Inoperative? Non-working? That takes in useless chatter - too much talk without the things of God or the glory of God anywhere to be found.

The Holy Spirit wants my tongue as His tool to dispense words of life, love, hope and heaven to others. Put it this way: evil words come from a life going in reverse, while good words are the result of going in forward gear for God. Idle words come from a life that is idling too long, giving out an exhaust of words and more words, but going nowhere. Keep your life in a conscious "Forward" for the Lord Jesus and you'll find little time for idle words that count for nothing.

My prayer: "Make me aware, dear Father, not only of good and evil words, but useless chatter that wears people out but never builds them up. Make my tongue Your tool."

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Page 5 "Forgive us our trash!"

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." James 1:19

What area of life causes you the most trouble? For me, it's the tongue. If I would use my one mouth only half as much as I should use my two ears, I would avoid unnecessary conflicts. Yes, after over fifty years of following Jesus, this is still the focus of my greatest concentration for improvement.

What wise advice James offers us in three words that begin with the letter "s".

1) Swift to hear! It's too easy to be quick to hear the wrong thing - like gossip. That's not what James means. We are to be quick to hear the needs, cries, heartaches, advice and counsel of others. Most important, we are to be swift to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit. 2) Slow to speak! "Keep your words sweet," a wise person said, "because you never know when you may have to eat them." If our hearts and minds accumulate trash, that is what will escape from our mouths. A six-year-old was overheard reciting the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our trash passes as we forgive those who passed trash against us." Was he more right than cute? I read somewhere that "Wisdom has two parts: having a lot to say; not saying it." Like Jesus, our words are to be gracious and measured, not hurtful and voluminous.

And finally, 3) Slow to wrath! I heard the story of a Sunday school teacher who was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining God's command to "honor thy father and thy mother," she asked if there is a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters. One lad quickly answered: "Thou shall not kill!" That makes me chuckle but it also gives me warning that I must be so in touch with Jesus that wrath cannot control and conquer me. We must learn that "He who angers you, controls you." When tempted to explode, look beyond the moment and see where it will lead - to a greater distance between you and that soul that God can use you to reach if only you pass the test of being like Jesus by offering love instead of wrath.

My prayer: "Father, my prayer is simple. Please make my life a model to others in being swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."