

*Follow  
HIM*

*Follow Him  
in  
Thought and Word*

*(How to Think, Talk, Text, and  
Tweet God's Way)*



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in  
Thought and Word*

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Tweet God's Way)*

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*(Psalm 19:14, NLT)*

By

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*Applying the principles of God's Word to our thinking, talking, texting, and tweeting is a tried and true way of communicating in this "Tower of Babble" in which we all live.*



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# Preface

**T**HE WORLD AROUND US IS at war with words. Cell phones, television, radio, Facebook, Twitter, and the Internet—we are confronted with a veritable tsunami of words in our daily lives. What is the impact and result of this storm of words? We are awash with wave after wave of unnecessary, unsavory, uncharitable, offensive, loud, and destructive words everywhere we turn. The misuse of communication is an epidemic, and it's reaching PANDEMIC status—disruptive, disheartening, and deadening to the spirit of people.

Whether you are strolling through your own neighborhood, walking through the parking lot of your favorite grocery store, or working out at the gym, we are under a constant barrage of words, a never-ending hail of chatter. There is no safe haven for your ears, much less the tender ears of your children and your grandmother—they are all under the same assault. Everywhere we go, whatever we do, we are greeted with an unending supply of language the vast majority of which is not even safe, much less productive!

Where does the war of words originate? We are all part of the problem. Think about your own

language—written and spoken. Would a playback of what you have written and said in the last ten days reveal anything offensive? Do we have filters installed that ensure our communication is what it should be? An honest assessment will make us realize that we all have much room for improvement in our communications.

Communication is vitally important. Meaningful, thoughtful, and well-reasoned words, both written and spoken, are much needed and desired. How do we arrive at the right level and types of communication? Does it even matter? Other than being a bit of a nuisance, is all the communication we confront a bad thing? What is the standard for communication? Has God spoken to the issue of communication: the how, what, when, and where of writing, speaking, listening, reading, and learning in godly ways? These are a few of the questions we will address here as we set out God's plan for how to communicate in this world and its unfiltered war of words.

# Introduction

**H**AS GOD SPOKEN TO OUR communication with each other? Does God take a stand on the disrespectful and distressing ways that our leaders and our news media speak to one another — with no one listening, everyone speaking at once, and no one respecting the time and space of mutual exchanges of important words? Yes and no. No, God has not spoken to the world; it follows the way of the world. Very definitely yes, God has spoken to the Body of Christ on how we are and are not to communicate. The first thing we might notice is this profoundly applicable warning from God:

<sup>19</sup> *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking.*  
(Proverbs 10:19, NKJV)

“Okay, that makes sense, I think. Yet how do we maintain good communication in the world in which we live without using many words, without following the pattern of the world around us?” We live in a world of many words—our social media, news channels, phones, watches, and computers; there is an endless stream of words—printed and spoken. How do we participate in the world without becoming like it?

You might say the world we live in is very similar to the one that existed when the Tower of Babel was built (see Genesis 11:1-9), but due to the volume, incomprehensibility, and foolishness of so much communication, it seems more appropriate to call ours the “Tower of Babble.” The Apostle Paul warned us, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world” (Romans 12:2, NIV). It is up to us to know and live out the standards God has given us; the world we live in is not an excuse to drop God’s safeguards. God has given us standards for our own benefit and for the benefit of those with whom we communicate. Further, we must recognize that if our language (in content, tone, and timing) is uniquely different from that of the world around us, we are giving a witness that could likely not be achieved by any other means. A person who is kind, considerate, and well spoken in the art of communication will seem so alien as they are not forcing attention on themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The use of language, verbal and nonverbal, can and should be quite beautiful and useful for so many good purposes. Words can also be so hurtful and used for widespread destruction. The difference between “babble” and healthy, productive speech is a part of what we are attempting to explore here. Productive, healthy communication doesn’t require a high volume of speech, but rather it depends on words carefully chosen for the highest good in the moment. This book is about understanding the origin and purpose of communication as well as learning to find the right word and offer it at the right time, in the right manner—that it would be helpful to the listener. We will explore how to be a part of this world without being squeezed into its likeness. Communicating using all the different means available but with an even and consistent standard of speaking that honors God is the ultimate goal here.

## Chapter 1

# The Very First Word

**G**OD SET AN EXAMPLE FOR US in His first communication. The God who created all began by speaking light into existence. God, who is light, spoke and gave us light.

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

*(Genesis 1:1-5, ESV)*

God spoke, and there was light. God brought order from chaos by speaking light into existence. God

declared the light good! We see the beauty of God's first words giving us order from chaos and light triumphing over darkness. God's words are for our good, and we, being made in His image, should follow His example in using good words timely offered. The plain and simple truth is that God is very interested in and concerned by what we have to say. God speaks to us about how we use words as much as almost any other topic in the sixty-six books making up the canon of Scripture that we call the Holy Bible. Our communication has a profound impact on us and our world. We need to know how to communicate well—in ways pleasing to God.

God speaks plainly, clearly, and finally about what we say, how we say it, and why. He says not to use too many words; when you do, sin is there. God gave us our very lives to be used for good—ultimately for His glory; our entire body is a gift to be used to love Him and others. The tongue that speaks and the mind that forms the words must be under God's control or they are out of control and out of His will.

God has given us some great tools to use in selecting and presenting words to others and in deciding what we receive into ourselves. He gave us a sound mind that can think these things out; He gave us filters to catch wrong words and thoughts; He gave us physical barriers (lips, teeth, and gums) to keep words in and feet to walk away with. May we make full use of all the communication tools God has given us.

**Prayer:**

*Father, thank You for the wonder and beauty of communication. I praise You for setting an example for me that Your communication is light and brings order from chaos. You are a good, good Father and perfect in all of Your ways, none more so than communication. Thank You, Father, for speaking so powerfully to me in Your Word. May I embrace You and all You lead me to so that I can speak and listen in ways that honor You and bless those with whom You graciously give me opportunity to communicate. All praise, honor, and glory be unto You, O Lord, forever and ever. I offer this prayer in the precious and matchless name of Jesus. Amen.*





## Chapter 2

# Word Filters

*(Proper Way to Install and Use an E429 Word Filter)*

**W**HEN GOD GIVES US A job to do, He always gives us the wherewithal to accomplish it in God-honoring ways. God's ultimate gift to enable us to live the Christian life (obviously after a Savior) is grace—gifting us with abilities to live and be the person He put us here to be. The person He created us to be is a person who loves his neighbor (all people) as himself. Love has no greater manifestation than our choosing to be careful, thoughtful, and always helpful in our thoughts and words.

There is a standard that should both guard and guide our speaking and our listening (for ourselves and those we love). What we say is vitally important, but what we listen to is critical also (more on this later). The standard for our speech is profoundly simple:

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

*(Ephesians 4:29, NIV)*

Here is our standard, our filter if you will: “Is what I am about to say helpful to the listener?” What could be simpler than that? Yet, because words are so powerful, and because it is so easy to speak before we think, this is one of our greatest challenges. We need to think and know what we say is vital to the speaker and the listener. Lives hang in the balance. We must graciously communicate only those things that are good and helpful for building up the listener. Ephesians 4:29 is the filter that must be installed and put to use in all our communications.

We must only speak, write, read, and hear words that are helpful for building up the speaker and the listener. The filter of helpfulness is one through which all our communications must pass—if they don’t meet this test, we need to avoid thinking, speaking, reading, or listening to the thoughts and words that miss the mark. We must filter out all words that are not helpful. This is the bottom line: If it builds up, we can speak it, Facebook it, twitter it, e-mail it, and write it; if it does not meet that criteria, *we must avoid it*—filtered out by the properly installed and functioning E429 filter.

Words are wonderful, but they can be weapons of mass destruction. Words are not inherently dangerous; they only become dangerous when misused. Timely and properly shared words convey encouragement, strength, peace, love, and affirmation. Ill-chosen and ill-timed words can be more destructive than the mostly deadly of diseases. In fact, it would be a very logical and plausible hypothesis to put forth that many, if not most, disease processes are at least influenced, if not directly caused, by words. Our immune system plays a vital role in our bodies’ battle against sickness and disease; our emotional well-being has a major influence on our immune system; and our emotional well-being is directly

impacted by the words we speak, write, read, and listen to. When we use the filter of helpfulness, we filter out the harmful effects of the communication process.

The positive, healing, affirming, and strengthening effect of the right word at the right time cannot possibly be overstated. If you want to positively transform the world around you, pick the right words and the right time. Only say things that will be helpful to the one listening, to build them up. Remember, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

Please notice, the filter has nothing whatsoever to do with truth. God did not say, "You can say anything that is true"; He said you could say that which is helpful to the one listening. There are many things that may be true, but if they are not going to help the hearer, don't say them. Period!

The filter of helpfulness does not mean we avoid dealing with difficult subjects; it does not mean we avoid trying to help children, spouses, neighbors, and strangers; it does mean we make better choices with our words so as to actually help rather than just criticize and tear down. We might say:

- To a child failing math, "Math is a very challenging subject. Do you have any thoughts of how we might help you through this challenge?"
- To someone who the world views as not appealing, "God made you perfectly. There is truly no one like you; you are God's cherished and beautiful creation, and I thank Him for you."
- To a neighbor who seems determined to bring the neighborhood down, maybe say nothing—but if it has to be said, then try something like, "I believe your yard can be as pretty as any in the neighborhood. I am looking forward to seeing you bring it to its full potential."

- To the one who just cut sharply in front of you in line at the grocery store, you probably say nothing—but if anything, “I can tell you are really busy, so I am glad to step back and let you go first.”

God spoke and the world was created. Communication is very powerful. We must be exceedingly careful in what and how we communicate. We must always pay attention to what we are reading, hearing, and thinking; the words we read and hear form the reservoir from which our communications (written and spoken) flow. Jesus said that we speak from the abundance of words in our hearts (see Matthew 12:34). If we are careful to make sure that only good ingredients go in, we can be assured only good will come out.

We all have a mixture of good and potentially bad words and thoughts floating around inside us. Therefore, we must be careful and intentional about giving thought to any statement before we “publish” it. Just because we think it does not mean it must or even should be said (more later on caring for our thoughts). When the thought forms, let’s pass it through the filter “How will this help the person I am about to speak to?” If you don’t have an immediate and clear answer, swallow the thought and the words. Just smile quietly.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to guard my mouth that I would not say things I should not say. Father, I have proven over and over that I cannot do this by myself. I need You, Lord, to send a fresh infilling of the blessed Holy Spirit to guide my thoughts so that I say things that will be helpful to the person I am speaking or writing to and anyone else who might hear or read my words. Lord, may the words I speak and the thoughts I think first be pleasing in Your sight and then let them come forth from me. Lord, help me.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 3

# Taming Our Tongues?

**H**AVE YOU EVER TRIED THE “do it yourself” program of language modification? I have—it will work as long as you are fully committed and everything goes the way you want it to go. That is to say, it is a total failure. We think, “If my tongue is a problem, I will fix that; I just will make up my mind to say only the right things. End of discussion!” Right? Wrong! God has been honest and blunt with us about our ability to control our own speech.

<sup>2</sup> For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

*(James 3:2)*

How many of us are able to control ourselves in every way? The answer to that question is none! What is the problem? We are Christians and God said we should be holy, so we will just tell our tongues to be holy and that’s that, right? Wrong! Here is a spiritual truth (as I understand it) that should be planted deep

for us to see and never forget: *God does not have a program to change our flesh!*

God did not send His Son to die for us so that we could undergo significant improvement, not even for us to have a total makeover. There is only one hope—that we must die to self and be born again spiritually. The old flesh will not perform to God's standards, especially not the tongue! Here is what God said about our tongues:

<sup>3</sup> We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. <sup>4</sup> And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. <sup>5</sup> In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches.

But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. <sup>6</sup> And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

<sup>7</sup> People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

*(James 3:3-8)*

We cannot control our tongues. Here is what happens when we try the self-help method to fix our tongue problem:

<sup>9</sup> Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. <sup>10</sup> And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is



not right! <sup>11</sup> Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? <sup>12</sup> Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

*(James 3:9-12)*

We go back and forth; we do fine with our self-controlled tongue problem until we get hit with something unexpected. Then our nature, our flesh, kicks in, and we say something that is anything but praising or pleasing to God. Now we have a mouth that is, in one moment, when things are going our way, putting forth praise and peace; then, a few minutes later, when something unexpected happens (I don't know why it should ever be unexpected; this is everyday life for 100 percent of us), out comes the "bitter water" — whether it be a curse word or just a disrespectful comment. We are inconsistent, which is offensive to God and confusing to those looking to us as leaders in God's kingdom and to those outside the Body of Christ.

The answer is not found by looking to our flesh but in looking above. We may all well know this verse—

<sup>20</sup> My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*(Galatians 2:20)*

—but have we thought, do we know it is not just certain parts of our body that have to be crucified with Christ? It is all of me that must be crucified with Christ—especially my tongue. We have to give the Holy Spirit full ownership and leadership over our minds and our mouths.

*God gives us a new nature when we are born again.* There is nothing in Christianity about a self-improvement program. God is not involved in remodeling our old self. We die to self, our flesh is crucified, and we live a new life led by the Spirit of God in us. The Holy Spirit is both willing and able to guide us in every way, but we have to spend time with Him and develop a relationship. We have to learn how to listen to Him just as we learn how to listen to a spouse or a friend—by doing it over and over and over. It is a process, and it begins each day by surrendering:

<sup>1</sup> And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

*(Romans 12:1-2)*

We have to submit all that we are, all that we have, unto the Lord; this includes our minds and our tongues.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, I can't do anything apart from You; I need Your help in every way. Lord, I especially ask You to help me in the area of my speech. I truly do not want to think or say anything that is not pleasing to You, so, Father, I surrender control of my thoughts and words to You; may I think and say only those things that are pleasing in Your sight. Help me not to be molded or conformed to the world around me and all the poor language choices I hear every day; instead, Lord, help me to be transformed in my mind so that I will think right thoughts and thus, by Your grace, speak right words. I thank You in advance as You do this great work in my mouth and mind to the glory of God, our Father; Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior; and the blessed Holy Spirit, our wonderful guide.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 4

# Getting Our Minds Right

*(So We Can Get Our Words Right)*

**T**HE MIND (AND OUR THOUGHT life) is the main filter for words. It is where the sewage needs to be separated from the pure, filtered spring water of communication. What comes out of our mouth comes from our brain. The Bible sometimes refers to our center of thinking (the brain) as our “heart.” There are quite a few verses that speak to this. The one we need to see first is this:

<sup>34</sup> For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

*(Matthew 12:34, ESV)*

There is a basic lesson from the kitchen that applies here: If you put good things in, good things will come out; but garbage in, garbage out! We have to be both careful and intentional with what goes into our minds (and the minds of those we love and have influence with and influence over). If the wrong thing goes in, you can bet it will come back out.

<sup>34</sup> For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. <sup>35</sup> A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart.

*(Matthew 12:34-35)*

We have to be saved — born again — in order to have a new nature. Let's pause here and talk about what that means. I am not speaking here of being on a church roll or having a regular pew at church, nor are we talking of what your parents or grandparents have done. There is only one way to be born again:

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

*(John 3:1-8, ESV)*

We must be born again. Okay, so how does that happen?

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

*(John 3:16, ESV)*

God loves us and made a way for us to be saved by believing in Jesus and His finished work. Jesus' final words on the cross were "It is finished."

<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."

<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

*(John 19:28-30, ESV)*

Jesus was simply saying He had finished His work of accomplishing salvation—He had paid our sin debt in full. He made a way for us to come to the Father through the finished work of the Son. Jesus also said that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that no man comes to the Father except through Him.

<sup>1</sup> "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going." <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to

him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.<sup>7</sup> If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

*(John 14:1-7, ESV)*

God has made a way; the way is Jesus. Jesus has done all of the work for us to be saved, and salvation is a gift to us from God. How do we receive this gift of life from God?

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ



Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(Ephesians 2:1-10, ESV)

When we are, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, born again, the Holy Spirit resides in us. The Holy Spirit makes His home in all who are in Christ.

<sup>9</sup> But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) <sup>10</sup> And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. <sup>11</sup> The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

(Romans 8:9-11)

Here is where we must make a firm decision: Do we live by the Holy Spirit who is in us, do we give our minds and our mouths to the control of the Holy Spirit in us? Or do we allow the flesh to continue to have control over what we think and say?

The battle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit in us is a daily struggle that will be with us as long as we are in this physical life. *This is only my opinion or understanding*, but it is an opinion based on many experiences, most of which are failures I have been guilty of. The Holy Spirit is in all who are in Christ, but the Holy Spirit is not in control of all who are in Christ.

Are your mind and your mouth controlled by the Holy Spirit of God or by your flesh, which is influenced by the spirit of this world, the enemy? The Holy Spirit is God, but the Holy Spirit is—to use words we understand—a person. Because the Holy Spirit is in a Christian doesn't mean that the Christian has a love relationship with the Holy Spirit. Many Christians share a home but do not enjoy a dedicated, growing, and healthy love relationship. Relationships must be developed and nurtured. The Holy Spirit wants to guide us, and He is ready and willing and more than able to guide us into all truth and to direct our thoughts and our words. There is one problem we have to overcome: We must be listening and ready, willing and able to hear the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God, the Holy Spirit of God. Where do we personally encounter God most readily? In the Word of God. If we are not spending committed, focused regular and frequent time in the Word of God, we will not be able to effectively follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. God's Word functions as the road signs the Holy Spirit uses to guide us. If we drive down the highway, thinking we know the way, and ignore the signs, we will miss the turn. When we are not spending time in the Word, guided by the Holy Spirit, we miss the turns in life.

So, we have to be born-again Christians, and we have to be seeking a growing, loving, dependent relationship with the Holy Spirit, daily giving Him leadership in our lives, especially over our thought life and our mouth.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to think right thoughts and speak right words so that You will be honored and those listening and reading will be helped—that the words I use would be like ministering angels to the person I am communicating with, that he or she may be lifted up by this communication and know that You are present in my words through Your Holy Spirit. I pray this in Jesus' name.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 5

# Mind and Mouth Yielded to God

**G**OD HAS PROMISED HE IS with us; He said He is not going anywhere: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5, *ESV*). When we are thinking and speaking, God is present—He knows what we are thinking and what we are about to say. In fact, David said of God,

*<sup>4</sup> You know what I am going to say  
even before I say it, Lord.*

*(Psalm 139:4)*

So, we need to have a steady conversation (praying without ceasing) with God about what we are thinking and what we are saying, writing, tweeting, texting, e-mailing, and publishing on Facebook God has given us a guideline for our thoughts and words:

*<sup>14</sup> May the words of my mouth  
and the meditation of my heart*

*be pleasing to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*(Psalm 19:14)*

Lord, we have to get our minds right. When we get our minds right, we will get our words right. The only way to get our minds right (after being born again and giving ourselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit) is to seek to be pleasing to God. "God, help me to think right thoughts so I can form right words so I can communicate in ways pleasing to you."

How many times have we spoken poorly and then, because we realized a pastor was present, apologized for our language? We should speak in a way that helps those listening, but ultimately all of our communication is to honor God.

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

*(Colossians 3:17)*

This is an extremely high standard: All speech, every word and every thought of a born-again believer, is done in the name of Jesus. There is no such thing as a meaningless conversation. The reality of this verse (looking at it from the end to the beginning) is:

God, You have redeemed my life from hell, and I love you with all my heart. God, You are the rock, the foundation for everything good in my life. Jesus, You are not just my Savior, You are Lord of my life; I am yours. My mind and my mouth belong to you, O Lord. Father, I want to live my whole life, and especially my thoughts and my words, in a way that is perfectly pleasing to you. Lord, create in me a

clean heart and mind; renew a right spirit within me so that all of my thoughts and meditations (things I think on) are good things.

Help me, Lord, to think on these things:

<sup>8</sup> 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.

*(Philippians 4:8)*

Father, when my mouth is yielded to You and all my thoughts and words are unto Jesus as my Lord and Savior, when I am thinking right thoughts, when the Holy Spirit is my guide, then Lord, by Your grace, I will speak those words that are pleasing to You.

This seems to work well until someone says something I don't like. My spirit says, "Oh, let me think of the right way to respond," but the enemy jumps in and says, "Wait a minute, that guy just offended you; you need to tell him where to get off," and without thinking, I respond too quickly and wind up speaking from my flesh rather than by the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I say the wrong things, and my speech is not God honoring. This must not be. We must each make it our daily goal, by God's grace, that the words we speak and the thoughts we think would be pleasing to God. God Himself becomes the filter for all of our communication.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, may the words that I think and the ones I speak, write, tweet, e-mail, and text be pleasing to You and a blessing to whoever receives them. Lord, help me to communicate blessings to others, that we would both be blessings to You and honor You in our lives, and especially as we communicate. Father, help me not to speak without weighing my words and passing them through the filter that says, "Is what I am thinking, wanting to say, and saying pleasing to God?" If so, then, Lord, help me to say it in love; if my words and my thoughts are not pleasing to You, then help me to close my mouth and change my thoughts and speak only as the Holy Spirit leads me. Lord, in Jesus' name I pray.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 6

# Slow to Speak

**I**T HAS BECOME AN ART form and a point of honor to know how to give a quick comeback. If you can deliver a one-liner just right, you are often, and tragically, held in high esteem for such ability. On the other hand, a thoughtful, careful, considerate person is often humiliated and held in disregard for not giving a cutting response. If you are slow and careful in your speech, you are subjected to open ridicule and shame. This dichotomy is a perfect contrast of the ways of the world versus the ways of God. We should not be surprised that the ways of the world and the ways of God are polar opposites!

God has told us that the ways we think and act are not the ways He thinks and acts (see Isaiah 55:8), so it should not surprise us at all that rather than encouraging us to be stand-up comedians or skilled at throwing out zingers at people, God said just the opposite:

<sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce

the righteousness of God.<sup>21</sup> Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

*(James 1:19-21, ESV)*

There are no more practical or effective words about speech in the entire canon of Scripture than this simple but crucial command from God: Be quick to hear. Be slow to speak. Be slow to anger.

God commands us to do this one simple but exceedingly difficult thing: Wait! Don't get in a hurry! Just because someone else spoke does not mean I have to answer. I am in control of my own thoughts and words. I can wait. I can say nothing if I want to. Just because others are spewing out words does not require that I follow their example. They are not my judge; God alone is my judge!

Have you ever heard that old saying "eat your words"? I am not sure of the origin, but we can easily imagine how this plays out: You jump out there and say something, and then you find out your bold statement doesn't stand up. You have to "eat your words," and they don't taste good when you have to take them back in. Waiting is a great guard against having to eat your words!

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to be quick to listen to what others are saying and to what You are saying. Help me to understand that just because someone else said something or did something does not mean I have to do anything or say anything. My judge is not man; You are my judge, O Lord, and I do not want or have to say anything that is not in Your plan for me today. Lord, help me to be thinking when others are talking. Help me to be calm in my soul and not allow others to control my emotions; help me, Lord, not to allow my emotions to be stirred by what others are saying. Lord, help me to be quick to listen and slow and careful in my thoughts; may my words be filtered through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Help me, Lord, to think right thoughts and speak and write words that are helpful to the hearer, and may it all be for Your glory. I pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.*



## Chapter 7

# God Created Our Minds and Our Mouths for a Purpose

**W**HAT IS THE PURPOSE OF the words we are thinking, speaking, and writing?

Words are thrown about at random; people say whatever pops into their minds with little or no thought or purpose. When we think, speak, and write without a clear and good purpose, there is a high price to pay by both the speaker and the listener. Language is a gift from God and will be used either to honor God or to dishonor Him.

Your life matters. Your thoughts and words matter in this life and beyond. God put each one of us here for a purpose, and we need to know and live out God's purpose for our lives. Our thoughts and words are as much a part of us as our heart and our hands. We have a choice; we must either live out all of God's purpose for all of our life or miss our whole reason for being. Living out God's purpose includes our thoughts and words.

What is our purpose, our reason for existence? Men and women have searched endlessly for their meaning in life. We have all asked these questions: “Why am I here?” “What is the meaning of my life?” “What does life amount to?”

*<sup>7</sup> Bring all who claim me as their God,  
for I have made them for my glory.  
It was I who created them.*

*(Isaiah 43:7)*

The Word of God says God formed each one of us for the purpose of His glory. Another way of saying our purpose is God’s glory is that our reason for existence is to be in a love relationship with Him—to praise God, worship Him, proclaim His greatness, and accomplish His will. Our minds and our mouths are created for the same purpose as the rest of our bodies, to glorify God. This is the filter for our thinking and our speaking: to glorify God—to honor Him. So we live our lives and speak our minds to accomplish what God has for us to do.

Our ultimate filter to render pure communication is simply this: “Are my thoughts and resulting words pleasing to God; do they honor God?” If God is honored by what we think, say, and write (in tweets and texts or on Facebook), then man will be blessed and will abundantly benefit from them. If God is not honored, then we are compelled to cast aside those thoughts and words; they are not fit for God’s purpose for our lives.

You may well be thinking, “I don’t know how to do that!” Neither do I. None of us knows how to live for God apart from the help of God. Salvation is necessary, but beyond being born again (which is all from God), we are likewise dependent on God each step of the way. Listen to how David described the way God has formed us and knows us:

<sup>1</sup> *O Lord, you have examined my heart  
and know everything about me.*

<sup>2</sup> *You know when I sit down or stand up.  
You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

<sup>3</sup> *You see me when I travel  
and when I rest at home.  
You know everything I do.*

<sup>4</sup> *You know what I am going to say  
even before I say it, Lord.*

<sup>5</sup> *You go before me and follow me.  
You place your hand of blessing on my head. . . .*

<sup>13</sup> *You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body  
and knit me together in my mother's womb.*

<sup>14</sup> *Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!  
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know  
it.*

<sup>15</sup> *You watched me as I was being formed in utter  
seclusion,  
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

<sup>16</sup> *You saw me before I was born.  
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.  
Every moment was laid out  
before a single day had passed.*

*(Psalm 139:1-5, 13-16)*

God knows! He knows you, and He knows me. He knows our thoughts before we think them; He knows our words before we speak them. We need to learn to constantly utter the simplest of prayers: "Lord, help me." "Help me, Lord, to think right thoughts. Help me, Lord, to say the right words. Lord, help me to only write, text, tweet, or post on Facebook words that honor You and Your purpose for my life." "Help me, Lord, not to think, say, or write anything that does not honor You. Help me, Lord, to live out Your purpose for my life."

We must not let the world around us shape us into its mold. We need to say to God, "You are the Potter; I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Your will, I pray."

*Prayer:*

*Lord, help me to think right thoughts; help me to say and write God-honoring words that serve Your purpose for me. You are a good, good Father, and I want to love and serve You with all of my heart, mind, soul, body, strength, words, and thoughts. I offer this prayer in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*



## Chapter 8

# Christ Is Our Example

**F**OLLOW THE LEADER IS A great game if you have the right leader. Many of the leaders we have today are not setting an example we should follow; they mostly do not even acknowledge God, much less honor Him. Jesus is the leader we must follow in thought, word, and deed! In fact, we are specifically commanded to have the same mind and thoughts (all words originate with thoughts) as Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

*(Philippians 2:5, NKJV)*

In the Amplified, it says it like this:

<sup>5</sup> Have this same attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus [look to Him as your example in selfless humility].

*(Philippians 2:5, AMP)*

We can and should use Jesus' words and thoughts at all times. When we are born again, it is no longer we

who live but Christ who lives in us (see Galatians 2:20). It is our duty and our joy to follow Christ in all things.

The world shows how *not* to think, speak, and act; its way of communicating is the polar opposite of the mind (and ways) of Christ Jesus. We are specifically commanded not to follow the ways of the world. Instead, we are told:

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

*(Romans 12:2, ESV)*

We must not let this world lead us into thinking and talking (texting, writing, e-mailing, tweeting) like it does. No matter how cool it may look to be quick on your feet and always having one-liners ready to sling at someone, that way of thinking and talking is not from God. The quick slashing response may play well in the media but not in the heart of God. We honor God when we practice patience, having and showing kindness and love in our thoughts and words; it throws the enemy a curve. The world has no idea how to respond to a Christian who speaks softly, kindly, and lovingly but with great authority. They do not know what to do with us, so we just keep our eyes on Jesus and keep on loving those around us, especially those who hate us the most.

Worldly talk (including spouting off one-liners) is not something invented recently; it is wrong now, and it was wrong thousands of years ago. We are to exercise the godly manner of listening carefully and attentively and giving thought before we respond. In fact, Solomon, the wisest man ever, spoke very plainly condemning the very thing so many admire today:

<sup>13</sup> *Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.*

*(Proverbs 18:13)*

That is pretty strong language—instead of being “cool” or “smart,” God said popping off is shameful and foolish. In another place, God talked about speaking without careful thought:

*<sup>20</sup> There is more hope for a fool  
than for someone who speaks without thinking.  
(Proverbs 29:20)*

When we decide to follow the leader, let’s make sure the leader is Jesus or someone who is clearly walking in His footsteps. We do not want to be conformed or shaped by the world but by God. The Word of God is the main source that shapes us. That is why Romans 12:2 says, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (NIV). The way to get our minds right, the way to be transformed is to be filled to the brim with the Word of God. This is off topic in one sense but is, in fact, the topic in another: The reason we want more and more of the Word of God is to point us more and more to the One the Word presents: Jesus. The reason we want more of Jesus is the more we are like Jesus, the more pleasing our lives are to God. The more we are honoring and glorifying God, the more we are living out God’s express purpose for our lives.

Jesus is our leader and our example in all things. He only said, thought, and did exactly what the Father showed Him. We must do likewise, and that completely precludes us from communicating like the world around us. Lord, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable in Your sight (see Psalm 19:14).

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to be shaped by You. Lord, You are my example in all things, especially in communication. Father, You have set an example for me; help me to communicate in the manner and ways You have shown me. Lord, may I be transformed in my mind to be more and more like Jesus. Help me, Lord, to think, speak, and write the words that are just right to help those who are listening. Thank You, God.*

*Amen.*

## Chapter 9

# Our Communications Belong to Jesus

**I**N PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS, he said straight out that we belong to Jesus:

<sup>6</sup>And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ.  
*(Romans 1:6)*

Because we belong to Jesus, our communications belong to Him as well. In fact, everything we are and all that we do is for Jesus or it is off the mark!

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.  
*(Colossians 3:17)*

I would say it like this: We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ; everything we do, all that we say, and all that we think is done in the name of and for the sake of Christ.

This isn't just for preachers; all who are in Christ have Christ in them, and because we are His, all that we do we do for Him. We are no longer our own. In another one of Paul's letters, he addressed the reality of doing all we do and being all we can be for the sake of Christ.

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

*(1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ESV)*

Reflect on this truth: Every born-again Christian is to do and say everything as Christ's ambassador — "a representative of the Lord Jesus." How profound is that? Every thought, every action, every word we think, do, and say, we do so in and for Christ Jesus.

Now, let's ask ourselves a few pointed questions: Do my thoughts right now line up with my role as Jesus' representative? Have my words in the last twenty-four hours been words Jesus Himself would use? The places I have been and the things I have done this week — do I feel good about each of those as a child of the King and as His ambassador to my family, home, job, and community as well as to the ends of the earth? Do I have a firm plan for doing a lot better tomorrow? That is the purpose and goal of this book.

We need to understand that we should not be living in our yesterdays. We have all failed in various ways. Honestly, I can recall times when I was the worst possible representative Jesus could ever have. I have had some monumental failures in thought, word, and deed. We need to understand what this means for us today, going forward. This is vital:



We have to know who we are and whose we are—and act like it. We need to think, talk, write, and live in a way that reflects the presence of Christ in our lives. This is not an act we can adopt for the public. This is all about giving our lives—fully and completely—over to Christ and saying to Him, “Lord, I give myself to You; I trust fully in Your presence in me to transform me into the person You would have me to be. Lord, grant me grace to be Your ambassador—honoring You with my thoughts, words, and deeds.”

Our goal today is not to impress the people around us. There is no benefit in achieving worldly status with one-liner stardom. God is saying if we make it our business to lead quiet lives, honoring Him in our thoughts, words, and deeds, He will grant unto us a peace beyond anything we can imagine—and it’s a lasting peace, not a peace of winning a minor point in a war of words (a war where the only winning move is not to play the game).

*Prayer:*

*Lord, thank You that I can count on You, and I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Help me, Lord, to trust in You, lean on You in every way, and know You will lead me in the right direction in my thoughts, words, and deeds. May I think, speak, and act in ways that will be pleasing to You in all things. Lord, help me to be Your ambassador to the world. In Jesus’ name.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 10

# The Love Filter

**G**OD SAID WE ARE TO love Him and love each other. Are we loving God and people with our thoughts and our communication (spoken, written, electronic)? If our duty is to love them, God and people, then love is the starting place for our thoughts and words.

Here is a filter for my thoughts and words: Does what I am thinking and what I am planning to say demonstrate true godly love toward the other person? If my words are born in love, then say it. If not, then don't say it and quit thinking it.

The clearest statement of what love really looks like is found in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth:

<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver

up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

*(1 Corinthians 13:1-8, ESV)*

The love filter is laid out for us like this:

- Are my thoughts and words (written and spoken) motivated by godly love?
  - Is my communication patient?
  - Is what I am about to write kind?
  - Do my words originate from feelings of envy or pride?
    - If I say what I am thinking, will I be guilty of arrogance or rude behavior?
    - Am I, in my thinking and speaking, insisting on doing things my way, or do I seek to do all in love, God's way?
      - Will what I am about to say and how I say it demonstrate patience and kindness, or is there an edge of irritability in it?
      - Will my speech reflect that I rejoice in the truth?
      - Am I communicating in a manner that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things? Or am I being selfish?

The love filter may seem complicated, but if we spend time meditating on these words from God and

seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit into all truth in our thoughts and words, God will give us the grace to succeed. The grace is there; we just need to tap into it by trusting on and resting in Christ Jesus.

*Prayer:*

*Lord, help me to love You and others, especially with my thoughts and words. Help me, Lord, to love with my whole heart as You call me into a deeper love relationship. May my life be so ordered that what I say, do, and think will be filtered through love and guided by the Holy Spirit to Your honor and glory. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.*



## *Chapter 11*

# *Captive Thoughts Produce Christ- Centered Speech*

**D**O YOU EVER HAVE A problem with your thoughts? Do you ever find yourself thinking about things that are far from the thoughts you should be having as Christ's representative? How do you feel when this happens? Like a loser, a traitor, a terrible sinner? Me too! We need to learn two things: where those thoughts come from and how we need to handle them.

When something comes into our mind—a fleeting thought (especially the bad ones)—we have to make a choice: keep it or send it back. Now, I used to get all down on myself when such a thought came flying through. I have discovered I am not responsible for my thoughts occurring, but I am responsible for what I do with them. One of my friends says, “There are always birds flying overhead and we are not responsible for them, but we are responsible for not allowing them to

light and build a nest.” That may not sound very spiritual, but it has helped me many times.

When we have one of these wrong thoughts come flying through, we can and should reject it—but what does that look like and how does it work? Let’s start by looking at a command we have from God’s Word:

<sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

*(2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV)*

Our thought life is the ultimate key to what we say and write (tweet, text, e-mail, or put on Facebook). Our thought life has to be under control. Our thoughts are just as offensive (sinful) before God as our words and actions. In other words, God is not impressed if we mumble something nice but our thoughts are much different, much darker in color and shape. We have to remember:

<sup>14</sup> *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart*

*be acceptable in your sight,*

*O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*(Psalm 19:14, ESV)*

This thought came to me this morning: If I have a kitchen cupboard full of good stuff—fresh coconut, chocolate chips, sweetened condensed milk, whole wheat flour—then I can turn out some really awesomely sweet treats. The same thing applies to my mind—I have to fill it full of good things so that whatever I create in my mind is good (godly). If good things go into my mind, good things will come out. Of course, the opposite is also true so we each have

to carefully guard what we take in through reading, listening and watching.

We have a plan to guard against putting bad things in but we still know that random thoughts will come flying into our thoughts; usually at the most inopportune moments (which for the enemy is always the most opportune moment. We have to meet these attacks head on with our biggest weapon – take those thoughts captive to Christ and pray them away.

*Prayer:*

*Lord, I reject that thought; it is not from You, it did not start with me, and I am not going down that trail. Lord, cleanse my mind of any influence this ill thought or feeling may have and create in me a clean mind and heart that I might glorify You with my thoughts and all my words. I pray in the mighty and matchless and wonderful name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*





## Chapter 12

# Speaking God's Words God's Way

**T**HERE IS NO BETTER, MORE practical, more complete book than the Bible. It is full of great teaching on how, when, and, among many others, when not to speak. We can learn everything we need to know about aligning our words and thoughts according to God's plan and avoid a lifetime of problems by trusting and obeying His direction. Think of it this way: It is God who created and gave us our minds and mouths. Who would be better able to teach us how to use them than God Himself?

### *1. How to speak when personal conflict arises*

*<sup>1</sup> A soft answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

*(Proverbs 15:1, ESV)*

When the other person turns the heat up by getting more fired up, do not follow their lead; instead, do what God said: be gentle, calm, mild. The point here is not to be run over; the point is to be under God's control (not ours or our temper's). This is a picture of meekness—power under the control and authority of God. The

problem may or may not go away, but if we speak with a soft, calm, firm but gentle voice, the situation cannot escalate from our side of the equation because we are gently refusing to add fuel to the fire. Let's look at how this verse reads in the New Living Translation:

*<sup>1</sup> A gentle answer deflects anger,  
but harsh words make tempers flare.*  
(Proverbs 15:1)

## 2. *Knowing if and when to speak*

This is a truth that is lost in the world today—not every word spoken to or at us needs or deserves a response. Saying nothing can be and often is the very best response. If the word sent our way does need or deserve a response, what it calls for is a reasoned response not an off-the-cuff one-liner.

*<sup>27</sup> A truly wise person uses few words;  
a person with understanding is even-tempered.*

*<sup>28</sup> Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent;  
with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*  
(Proverbs 17:27-28)

Sometimes the right response is no response; sometimes it is a well-reasoned response that uses the bare minimum of words. If you are not sure what the answer or response should be, try silence—it conveys a wisdom that is actually far ahead of how our response would have been received.

This is kind of blunt, but it is powerfully simple and to the point; there are times when the best way to stay out of trouble is to take this advice:

<sup>23</sup> *Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut,  
and you will stay out of trouble.*

*(Proverbs 21:23)*

When we learn these lessons from God, we can stop a problem before it ever really gets started. I will also add one final note on this narrow point; there are times in life when something is said that you do not approve of. Now, the politically correct manner of handling it would be to confront the speaker. I learned, although I do not recall from whom, many years ago an alternative way of handling delicate matters. Let me give a simple example:

You are in a group, and someone throws a coarse story or joke or word into play. Now, we can fuss and tell the person they are wrong, but often that will just produce a combative response. What I have learned is if you cast your eyes down and refuse to buy in with a smirk of approval but instead have a solemn look with eyes downcast, the person is put on the spot in a gentle but very pointed way. It also can lead to an opportunity to gently witness if they question you about your lack of response. I have to confess right here, there was a time in my life when I would have been the worst offender of the coarse comment; by God's grace I have been and continue to be transformed, and I thank Him for His work in me.

Finally, these two simple but sharply pointed verses:

<sup>20</sup> *Fire goes out without wood,  
and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.*

*(Proverbs 26:20)*

<sup>11</sup> *Fools vent their anger,  
but the wise quietly hold it back.*

*(Proverbs 29:11)*

If we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into foolish and ungodly discussions, the fuel for the fire is gone—and the fire goes out. Instead of blowing off steam, let's try godly wisdom by simply being quiet.

3. *Speaking words of wisdom and helpfulness to others*

<sup>23</sup> *From a wise mind comes wise speech;  
the words of the wise are persuasive.*

*(Proverbs 16:23)*

We will be amazed at what a positive impact we can make if we take our time to arrive at a simple but wise and insightful comment. People may well find themselves highly persuaded by a thoughtful comment. You may change the course of history with patience and thoughtfulness. In fact, I would go further and say you *will* change the course of history; the history of that circumstance will be much better when we conduct yourself in these Christ-centered ways of thinking, living, and speaking.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to give my mind and my mouth to You—to be used in accordance with Your words and Your ways and Your timing. Lord, give me a new and deep awareness of how much You care about my thought life and my words. I offer my mind and my mouth as living sacrifices to You—use them for Your glory as You direct and I, by Your grace, trust and obey. I pray in the beautiful and powerful name of Jesus.*

*Amen.*

## Chapter 13

# “Power Tool” Safety

*(Using Our Minds and Mouths Safely)*

**A**REN'T TOOLS GREAT? THEY HELP us do so many different jobs and do them well. I had a really good woodworking shop at one time; in fact, it was a far better shop than I was woodworker—which translates there were tools there I didn't really know how to use. Power tools, like many other things in life, are great as long as they are put to the use for which they were intended. If we use a power tool for a purpose other than it was intended or use it contrary to the manual, it then becomes inherently dangerous. Our minds and our mouths, if not used as intended, can be the most destructive power tools on earth.

Our minds and our mouths are tools given to us by God. He gave them to us for specific purposes. We have seen that our words proceed from our thoughts, and so we have to use our minds correctly in order to use our mouths (and our hands) lovingly. James warned us of the great dangers of this small thing called the tongue:

<sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small

fire!<sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

*(James 3:5-6, ESV)*

Many people have suffered life-altering injuries from using saws and similar equipment; one little miscalculation and a finger or worse is gone—and it can't be undone. Words are exactly the same: Once a word is spoken, tweeted, e-mailed, or published, it can't be put back in your mouth and its impact has been felt. Frankly, the impact of words can be far more devastating than any man-made tool or device. Words have led to untold horror and destruction since the beginning of time.

So we have to know the purpose of our minds and mouths and use these dangerous tools as reflected in the owner's manual. Our mind and our tongue, like the rest of our body, soul, and spirit, has one ultimate purpose: to love and honor God and people.

<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

*(Matthew 22:36-40, ESV)*

We have great opportunities to love God and people with our mouths and our minds every day. These tools, our minds and our mouths, exist to honor God by loving obedience. Our thoughts and words must be under

God’s control just as much as our eyes, our hands, and our feet. We are called to employ our thoughts and words to this end: loving God and others with all our heart.

We read earlier that when words are many, sin abounds! Many Scriptures warn us about how and what we should speak—the gist of all of these warnings is simply that our words should point toward loving and honoring God and other people. This truth should operate as a filter for our thoughts and words. When the filter is on, it asks of each thought and word, “Will these thoughts and words honor and demonstrate love for Him and other people?” If the answer is yes, then speak with confidence. If the answer is “I am not sure,” then we should be very slow to speak (if we should speak at all). If the answer is “no, this thought or words is not loving or honoring to God or to others,” then we need to lose the thought and drop the word.

Rarely do we regret what we did not say; it is the overflow of words that usually bites us. There is a word in Paul’s second letter to Timothy that speaks to this very pointedly. He warned us against *babble*.

<sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness,<sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene.

(2 Timothy 2:16-17, *ESV*)

What is babble? Great question! Let’s get a good solid answer. I am not going to consult Webster’s Dictionary; instead, I am looking at the original word used by Paul and finding its meaning in English.

κενοφωνία *kenophōnía*; gen. *kenophōnías*, fem. noun from *kenós* (2756), vain, and *phōnḗ* (5456), a voice. **Empty or fruitless speaking.**

In 1 Tim. 6:20 and 2 Tim. 2:16, Paul designates the *bébēloi* (952), godless, as those who engage in *kenophōnía*, **senseless or wicked discourses, speeches that are devoid of any divine or spiritual character, fruitless as far as the satisfaction of man's need of salvation and the molding of Christian life and character are concerned.** It is equivalent to the “empty [*kenós* {2756}] words [*lógos* {3056}]” (a.t.) in Eph. 5:6.<sup>2</sup> (emphasis added)

If we trimmed away all the babble from our daily communication of words spoken, written, tweeted, texted, or posted on Facebook, what would be the effect? There would be much less time expended on those efforts because, if we are honest, I believe the majority of what we say falls into the category of babble. With the quiet time that is opened up, we could pray, read, and meditate on Scripture; we could “be still and know that I am God!” (Psalm 46:10). God gave me this word a coupe of days ago:

My life is prayer.  
Prayer is my life.

Prayer is not babble; it is communication with God—listening, thinking, meditating, and speaking. This statement can be true for every Christian—my life is prayer, and prayer is my life. In true prayer, there is no babble.



**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, You are the precious Creator and Giver of the tools of my mind and my mouth. Father, I confess right now that I have misused my tools. Lord, help me; Lord, have mercy upon me; Lord, forgive me and cleanse me of all unrighteousness. Lord, thank You for sending an expert guide, the blessed Holy Spirit, to teach me how to correctly use these tools. Help me today not to say whatever comes to mind, not to tweet or text or post things that are not God honoring or loving to You and my neighbors. Lord, by Your grace, may I recognize my sin of words that do not honor You and may I, by Your same grace, cease from babbling. Lord, help me to use my mind and my mouth to honor and serve You forever. In Jesus' name.*

*Amen.*



## Chapter 14

# Gossip Is Wrong

**W**E HAVE TO BE VERY plain and very serious here: Gossip is wrong, plain and simple. Gossip is not innocent talk; it is sin. We have made light of it, chuckled about it, and, worst of all, been grievously guilty of it. But there are two things we need to look at:

- What does God say about gossip?
- What is the alternative to gossip?

God has said many things about gossip, and the first and chief one, to me, is our primary verse:

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

*(Ephesians 4:29, NIV)*

Only say those things that are useful for building others up—if it's not helpful, don't say it.

What is gossip?

7400 לִיָּכָר [rakiyl /raw·keel/] n m. From 7402 a scandal-monger (as travelling about); TWOT 2165b; GK 8215; Six occurrences; AV translates as “slander” twice, “talebearer” twice, “tale-bearer + 1980” once, and “carry tales” once. 1 slander, slanderer, tale bearer, informer.<sup>3</sup>

Here what God said very pointedly about gossip:

*<sup>19</sup> A gossip goes around telling secrets,  
so don't hang around with chatterers.*

*(Proverbs 20:19)*

These are my words, but the plain and simple truth is gossiping is lying. We were not there to see it and we do not know what happened; we are telling what we have been told. There is no way the report of the incident stays true to what actually happened. Even if we are eyewitnesses to an event, we cannot see into the person's heart or know what happened fifteen minutes earlier. Even if we could see into a person's heart and we gave a true report of what we have seen, there are still three major problems: (a) God said don't, (b) what we are saying is not being helpful to the person to whom we are speaking, and (c) without a doubt our only honest response to whatever the circumstances are would be a blunt: “There but for the grace of God go I.”

We are commanded not to speak evil of others! If there is a problem, then Scripture tells us to go directly to that person and work out the problem.<sup>4</sup> Standing and speaking negatively with a person about a third person is not the way to address a problem; the warnings about this are many. Here is but one example:

<sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. <sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were once

foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

*(Titus 3:2-7, ESV)*

Among the many scriptural notes about gossip (also called “idle chatter” and “babble”), here is one that should cause us to sit up and take strong note of just how God views such. These verses pierce any notion that gossip is something to be winked at:

<sup>28</sup> Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. <sup>29</sup> **Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.** <sup>30</sup> They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. <sup>31</sup> They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. <sup>32</sup> **They know God’s justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.**

*(Romans 1:28-32, emphasis added)*

I don't know how there could be a stronger condemnation of gossip. Notice that it comes at the end of the list, a high-profile place, and is included with other sins including "greed, hate, envy, murder." How strong is that!

Interesting that *gossip* sounds vaguely similar to *gospel*—the first is a lie from the pit of hell, and the latter is the greatest good news ever. If we want to chat, let's chat about the great news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—God's desire that all come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. What if every gossip story that had ever been started was replaced with the good news of Jesus? The Lord might well have already come back because the whole world would probably be saved. I know that is hyperbole, but can you just imagine the impact if the time and effort devoted to gossip were replaced with the good news of Jesus and prayer for others? Praise be to God.

<sup>36</sup> And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. <sup>37</sup> The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.

(*Matthew 12:36-37*)

**Prayer:**

*Lord, forgive me for the words I have spoken against others. Lord, have mercy on me and cleanse me from my sin of gossip and idle chatter. I do not want to engage in gossip of any kind, yet I live in a world in love with juicy tidbits about one another. Lord, help me never to taste the morsels of fire that are gossip. Father, give me a heart to pray for people and not to spread stories but instead to pray for their healing, their renewal, and their blessing. Lord, help me to spend my time in the Word of God and in prayer rather than baring tales against my neighbors; may I turn my wasted time into productive “good news” time—telling others about Jesus by the way I think and talk and live my life. In Jesus’ name.*

*Amen.*





## Chapter 15

# *A Recipe for Right Thinking and Speaking*

**W**ITH COOKING, SOMETIMES RECIPES AREN'T critical (soups, for example) and other times (boiled seafood, for example) ignoring the rules is disastrous. God's recipes for all things are vitally important to the lives of His people—none more so than His recipe for right thinking and speaking. One of God's recipes for right thinking is found in Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. Paul was addressing conflicts within the church, and he gave them (and us) this recipe for thinking and speaking God's way:

<sup>2</sup> Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. <sup>3</sup> And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

<sup>4</sup> Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

*(Philippians 4:2-9)*

First, we see that Paul was not bashing them or putting them down. He did just the opposite; rather than focusing on what they may be in error about, he reflected back on some good things they had done. Paul's methods, as well as his words (all being God inspired and inerrant), are a model for us. Then he continued by giving them very important foundational keys to living life abundantly in the Body of Christ by right thinking. The head will always lead the body just as the Head (Christ) always leads the Body (all Christians).

<sup>4</sup> Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!

*(Philippians 4:4)*

Remember, we are talking about the battleground of our minds; we must win the war in order to have profitable words because our thoughts are the foundation for our words. So, let's take a look at just what Paul is showing us here. He was not saying there is no problem; every day brings problems, which is part of our process of growing up in Christ Jesus. Paul was saying, "Before you even get to the problem, spend some time rejoicing in the Lord." So when we experience challenges, don't pick up the phone to call your neighbor and tell them what the other neighbor did; go into your prayer closet (wherever you happen to be) and spend some time rejoicing in the Lord. No matter what the other person said or did, we can and must still say, "God is God; He loves us and has made a way in Christ for us to be reconciled to Himself; we are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us; God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth; nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, least of all these issues with other people; there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus; in Christ we are assured we will live forever." It is time to rejoice—all this far exceeds anything that is going on in our lives. We need to cease worrying and talking about what others have said and just rejoice in the Lord, offering up praises to Him.

<sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember the Lord is coming soon.

*(Philippians 4:5)*

Would our thinking and speaking be different if we knew Jesus was near, looking and listening? He is near, looking and listening. The simple truth we have to accept is this: *He is here!* And not only is He fully here in the Holy Spirit, He is coming back for us. May we have

a renewed awareness of the presence of Christ and may that transform how we use our cellular phones and computers as well as our minds and our mouths. Our thoughts and words *cannot* be based on what someone else says or does; instead our standard is who Jesus is and who He calls us to be. In all circumstances, especially in conflict, we must reflect the nature of Christ—this is God’s very purpose for saving us, to see us conformed to the image of Christ (see Romans 8:29). So, here is how we should think about the problems we are facing:

<sup>6</sup> Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.<sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

*(Philippians 4:6-7)*

Instead of agonizing over what was said against you or to you, rest in Christ. Quit worrying about what others have to say; God alone is our judge. When we cease to worry (the most ungodly and wasted emotion we can have, in my opinion) and trust God, we will find a peace that is beyond anything we could ever dream of on our own. We will be overwhelmed with God’s peace as we fully trust Him in everything, especially in that moment when we were trying to solve a problem that was not ours to solve.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

*(Philippians 4:8)*

Paul gave us the ultimate recipe for right thinking. He said, “Hey, don’t get all worried about what others are doing or saying” (don’t try to figure out how to zap them with a crushing one-liner or a comeback). He told us to quit worrying and get our thoughts right, and then we will experience deep peace. God knows that if we have our kitchen cabinet (mind) full of good ingredients, the result will be very good. Paul said these are the ingredients for a mind at peace—which leads to a mouth and hands that are serving God—whatever is . . .

- True
- Honorable
- Right
- Pure
- Lovely
- Admirable
- Excellent
- Worthy of Praise

When our minds are fixed on these wonderful ingredients, we will no longer be inclined toward the old base thoughts that kept our minds bound up in turmoil and sin. This is not a one-time thing for us; it is a daily commitment to follow the recipe for our minds. We are under constant assault to fill our minds with negative, dishonorable, despicable, low things; we must not give in, we must rise up to the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). The recipe for right thinking, talking, and texting is to set our minds on things above—especially Jesus, who is Himself true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of all praise.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, I want to think and say what You want me to think and say. Help me, Lord, to desire and promote good not evil. Give me a steadfast heart of love that will filter out all non-helpful and unloving thoughts, words, and actions from my life. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me for the sake of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is in His name I pray.*

*Amen.*

## Chapter 16

# Healing Words

<sup>4</sup> *Gentle words are a tree of life. (Proverbs 15:4)*

**W**ORDS CAN BE LIKE A beautiful cottonwood tree swaying gently in the soft summer breeze, casting its shadows over the bend in the river slipping quietly beneath its leaves. What a quiet, restful, refreshing, and encouraging portrait can be painted with proper words well chosen and timely shared.

The full verse started above is:

<sup>4</sup> *Gentle words are a tree of life;  
a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

*(Proverbs 15:4)*

What a contrast—from words that are life giving to those that tear at the very fabric of life! Surely we would never intentionally desire to fall into this latter category. If the Spirit of God is in us, we will never be led in such a direction by Him. However, we still live in flesh houses, and our old nature and the enemy is still here battling us day and night.

How in the world do we become those who are living and communicating as trees of life? There is a very clear

answer to this question. Of course, we must be born again (faith in Christ's finished work); then we have to be led by the Spirit rather than the flesh. There are some exercises we can do to help with these challenges.

<sup>9</sup> *How can a young person stay pure?  
By obeying your word.*

<sup>10</sup> *I have tried hard to find you —  
don't let me wander from your commands.*

<sup>11</sup> *I have hidden your word in my heart,  
that I might not sin against you.*

<sup>12</sup> *I praise you, O Lord;  
teach me your decrees.*

<sup>13</sup> *I have recited aloud  
all the regulations you have given us.*

<sup>14</sup> *I have rejoiced in your laws  
as much as in riches.*

<sup>15</sup> *I will study your commandments  
and reflect on your ways.*

<sup>16</sup> *I will delight in your decrees  
and not forget your word.*

(Psalm 119:9-16)

We are all young in the sense we are all being transformed and we all have great need for using our minds and our mouths for good purposes. God has instructed us to hide the Word of God in our hearts. If



we reflect, in the Spirit, on the Word of God, our communication will be like that life-giving cottonwood tree blowing in the late summer afternoon breeze with the river flowing below—we will speak healing into the lives of others. When you speak healing words to others, your own soul and spirit are being renewed and refreshed.

Every day we each have to decide: Will we follow God's purposes for our communications—minds, mouths, texting fingers, and writing hands—or will we communicate the way we see it done in the world around us—spewing out wasted, disrespectful, hateful, and destructive words? Here is that picture from Scripture:

*<sup>1</sup> Oh, the joys of those who do not  
follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with mockers.*

*<sup>2</sup> But they delight in the law of the Lord,  
meditating on it day and night.*

*<sup>3</sup> They are like trees planted along the riverbank,  
bearing fruit each season.  
Their leaves never wither,  
and they prosper in all they do.*

*<sup>4</sup> But not the wicked!  
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.*

*<sup>5</sup> They will be condemned at the time of judgment.  
Sinners will have no place among the godly.*

*<sup>6</sup> For the Lord watches over the path of the godly,  
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.*

*(Psalm 1:1-6)*

The Word of God planted deep in our hearts is the correct well from which to draw our words for communication with God and people. No, I am not saying we have to quote the Bible (it's certainly a great thing to do), but we want our communication to be based on and drawn from the words and principles given to us in God's Word. As we labor in these mines, we will find that we have been refreshed and renewed, and we shall be fruitful trees for God. Then we are, by His grace, living out our purposes.

***Prayer:***

*Lord, I want to be a tree planted by the river of Your Word that I might be fruitful in all I think, speak, and write. In all of my words, may I speak healing and blessing into the lives of others. Help me, Lord, to look to You as my help and my guide in all things. Lord, I offer myself and all that I am as a living sacrifice to You. In Jesus' name.*

*Amen.*

# Conclusion

<sup>11</sup> *A word fitly spoken*

*is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*

*(Proverbs 25:11, ESV)*

**T**HIS IS A BEAUTIFUL WORD picture that characterizes what all communication should look like. We need to recognize that every thought, word, text, and tweet is important. We should strive to honor God and love others with all of our thoughts and words. We need to use God's guidelines as filters for our thoughts and words so that all of them are pleasing in His sight. There is no such thing as insignificant communications; if it is important enough to think or say, it should meet God's guidelines.

We are creations of God, saved by Christ's finished work on the cross, called to be made over in His image. Our minds and our mouths, our hands and our eyes are holy vessels created for good works in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world. May it always be our goal that our communications be words fitly spoken like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my mind be pleasing unto You and may they be a blessing to those who receive them. In Jesus' name.*

*Amen.*

## *Appendix*

# *Scriptures to Meditate On and Memorize*

<sup>14</sup> *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of  
my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*

*(Psalm 19:14, ESV)*

<sup>29</sup> *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out  
of your mouths, but only what is helpful for  
building others up according to their needs,  
that it may benefit those who listen.*

*(Ephesians 4:29, NIV)*

<sup>19</sup> *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking.*

*(Proverbs 10:19, NKJV)*

<sup>2</sup> *For if we could control our tongues, we  
would be perfect and could also control our-  
selves in every other way.*

*(James 3:2)*

<sup>7</sup> People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

*(James 3:7-8)*

<sup>1</sup> And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

*(Romans 12:1-2)*

<sup>34</sup> For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

*(Matthew 12:34, ESV)*

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

*(Colossians 3:17)*

<sup>19</sup> Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; <sup>20</sup> for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

*(James 1:19-20, ESV)*

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

*(Philippians 2:5, NKJV)*

<sup>20</sup> *There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking.*

*(Proverbs 29:20)*

<sup>5</sup> We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

*(2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV)*

<sup>11</sup> *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

*(Proverbs 15:1, ESV)*

<sup>27</sup> *A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered.*

<sup>28</sup> *Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*

*(Proverbs 17:27-28)*

<sup>23</sup> *Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.*

*(Proverbs 21:23)*

<sup>20</sup> *Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops.*

*(Proverbs 26:20)*

<sup>11</sup> *Fools vent their anger,  
but the wise quietly hold it back.*

*(Proverbs 29:11)*

<sup>23</sup> *From a wise mind comes wise speech;  
the words of the wise are persuasive.*

*(Proverbs 16:23)*

<sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

*(James 3:5-6, ESV)*

<sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene.

*(2 Timothy 2:16-17, ESV)*

<sup>19</sup> *A gossip goes around telling secrets,  
so don't hang around with chatterers.*

*(Proverbs 20:19)*

<sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

*(Titus 3:2, ESV)*



<sup>36</sup> And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. <sup>37</sup> The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.

*(Mathew 12:36-37)*

<sup>4</sup> Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

*(Philippians 4:4-9)*

<sup>4</sup> *Gentle words are a tree of life;  
a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*

*(Proverbs 15:4)*

<sup>9</sup> *How can a young person stay pure?  
By obeying your word.*

<sup>10</sup> *I have tried hard to find you —  
don't let me wander from your commands.*

<sup>11</sup> *I have hidden your word in my heart,  
that I might not sin against you.*

<sup>12</sup> *I praise you, O Lord;  
teach me your decrees.*

<sup>13</sup> *I have recited aloud  
all the regulations you have given us.*

<sup>14</sup> *I have rejoiced in your laws  
as much as in riches.*

<sup>15</sup> *I will study your commandments  
and reflect on your ways.*

<sup>16</sup> *I will delight in your decrees  
and not forget your word.*

(Psalm 119:9-16)

SCRIPTURES TO MEDITATE ON AND MEMORIZE

<sup>1</sup> *Oh, the joys of those who do not  
follow the advice of the wicked,  
or stand around with sinners,  
or join in with mockers.*

<sup>2</sup> *But they delight in the law of the Lord,  
meditating on it day and night.*

<sup>3</sup> *They are like trees planted along the riverbank,  
bearing fruit each season.  
Their leaves never wither,  
and they prosper in all they do.*

*(Psalm 1:1-3)*

<sup>11</sup> *A word fitly spoken  
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*

*(Proverbs 25:11, ESV)*



## About the Author

**H**OLLIS MCGEHEE IS A LIFE long resident of Franklin County, Mississippi, who now makes his home on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Ocean Springs. He is the father of three children, Caj McGehee, Simmons M. Copeland, and Abbay McGehee. He is a Senior Status Judge for the State of Mississippi. He is the author of two prior works, *Judicial Beatitudes of the Ancient and Noble Art of Judging* and *Follow Him in All Things*.



# Endnotes

1. Ben Carson's manner of speaking in the 2016 Republican Presidential Primary debate season is a prime example.
2. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).
3. James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).
4. This is not a writing on discipline. However, one of several places that subject is addressed in Scripture is Matthew 18:15-17.

