Sound Speech-Taming the Tongue

Taming the tongue is an issue every human being faces, even those who reject God-they get themselves into trouble with their tongues and realize that it is a problem. Often our words come back to haunt us. We talk a lot. We say about 16,000 words in a day. That is verbally. That doesn’t account for the number of words we say in this age of texting and emailing and posting to social media. So there is a vast opportunity to get words wrong. What we hope to do today is to rather than trying to sift through all the things that go wrong in all those opportunities, we are going to look to look at some big building block type things that as they are more and more refined, then the frequency of getting words wrong in those vast opportunities is reduced.

1. Where do our words come from?
2. We say what we think and often we think what we feel.
3. Proverbs 16:23-the heart instructs the mouth
4. Proverbs 15:28-a wicked man pours out wicked thoughts
5. We can therefore logically conclude that to control the tongue we need to control our thoughts and our feelings, controlling our hearts.
6. Proverbs 4:23-Watch over your heart with all diligence for out of flows the springs of life
7. Matthew 12:33-35-The good heart speaks good things and the wicked heart speaks wicked things
8. Megan Wells in a ladies’ lesson on the tongue made this next conclusion which I think is really helpful-we can then use tongue issues to diagnose our heart issues.
9. We have a list of foolish and wise words. We can take a moment to look these words and recognize our “symptoms”-which of these foolish words are common in our lives and which of these wise words are missing in our lives. Then as we go on in our study today, we can think about how these general principles apply specifically to ourselves.
10. What is our goal?
11. Wise, apt words
12. Proverbs 22:17-21-Wise words that are so plentiful in our minds that they are ready on our lips
13. Proverbs 25:11-So that we can confidently know what it is that apple of gold in settings of silver that is good to say
14. Words that are transparent (WISYWYG) and unregretted
15. The idea of no hidden meanings or hidden agendas
16. Matthew 12:37 tells us our words will either justify us or condemn us
17. Therefore we should not regret our words and not fear the judgment of our words.
18. Proverbs 21:15-The exercise of justice is a joy for the righteous, but a terror to the workers of iniquity
19. So how do we work to have these wise, apt, unregretted words…
20. An overarching principle to keep in mind-swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath James 1:19
21. Learn to love wisdom and hate foolishness
22. Learning to love wisdom is being swift to hear
23. The book of Proverbs is all about the acquisition of wisdom
24. Seek her as silver-Proverbs 2:4
25. It is a blessing to find wisdom-Proverbs 3:13
26. She is more precious than jewels-Proverbs 3:15
27. There is peace in all her ways-Proverbs 3:17
28. She is a tree of life for those who take hold of her-Proverbs 3:18
29. In all your getting, get wisdom-Proverbs 4:4-9
30. Conversely, loving foolishness is being slow to hear, swift to speak, swift to anger
31. We need to understand that not only do we say what we think or feel, but we say what we LIKE to say or what feels GOOD to say
32. James 1:14 says we sin when we are enticed by our own lusts-that means when doing something wrong looks very, very appealing to us.
33. In sinning with our tongues, saying those sinful words is very, very appealing to us.
34. Sometimes we like making those one line zingers that put people in their place, we like to prove we are right by proving they are wrong, we like debate, we like being the martyr, we like pity, we want that affirmation that we are the martyr, or that we are right to be complaining about our situation. There are lots of things we like to hear or want to hear so we speak words to try to draw them out. Proverbs 28:25-26 let us know that pride is the root of these issues-it is arrogance and trusting in your own heart and what you own heart desires. And that is what leads us away and entices us into sin.
35. Look again at the list of words. We have to change in our minds which side (or even a particular kind of words) is appealing to say and what kind of words are hard for us to say. The kind of words that are easy to say make the opposite kind of words hard to say. We often find foolish words easy and appealing to say when we have heart and therefore tongue issue. Make those foolish words taste bitter in your mouth so that you don’t have the desire to say them.
36. Learning to hate those words and being offended at hearing ourselves say those kinds of words will help us not be drawn away and enticed by those kinds of words.
37. A snapshot picture of foolishness versus wisdom-Compare the earthly foolishness and the wisdom from above in James 3:13-18. These verses come after James has discussed the fire that a tongue can produce. Which of these characteristics can you say are true about you, for good or bad? Learn to hate the one and seek the other.
38. Learn to value self-restraint over self-indulgence
39. Being “slow to hear, swift to speak, swift to wrath” is self-indulgence. It is just doing what comes easy. It is just riding along the waves of events and emotions and letting them rule our lives and letting the words just flow.
40. This is where these idle, careless, useless words come from that Jesus spoke of Matthew 12:36.
41. These is where manipulative and less than transparent words come in.
42. We know we shouldn’t sound a certain way, so we craft our words and phrase our words such to still indulge in what we want to say, but in a way we feel justified saying them or that we can “get by with” saying.
43. Proverbs 26:18-19-This is like a person who throws out an arrow of fire at someone and then says, “Oh, I was just joking.”
44. Or I was just venting, or I was just keeping it real, or I was just whatever….
45. We think this self-indulgence in words will make us feel better. But what we actually do is take the yuckiness that is inside us and put it on someone else.
46. “I am such a nicer person when I’ve been able to spew my mouth vomit on someone.”
47. What a disgusting image, but we think that is what makes us into a “nicer” or “better” person?
48. When we hear “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”-we know this takes a lot of self-restraint.
49. And it makes us feel a little uneasy, because it’s hard to do, but also we don’t really want to do it sometimes.
50. We feel this pull that says, “Well I gotta be free to be me!”
51. We all have personality traits that make us into the unique individual that we are. And so many of these are not the issue and are not what we are talking about here.
52. But in giving our lives over to God and seeking first His rule in our lives, we do have to give over those parts of ourselves that are sinful, harmful, and destructive.
53. And we do a lot of sin, harm, and destruction with our words.
54. Our words have meaning, they have power, they do harm. James 3:5-we can start a huge runaway forest fire with one word.
55. We must do three things in relation to this idea.
56. We must accept that we can’t always say all that we’d like to say or that we’d think to say or that we think would feel good to say.
57. We must be willing to and be diligent in guarding in our words.
58. We must value this guard about our words.
59. Proverbs 13:3-guarding our mouths preserve our lives
60. Proverbs 21:23-guarding our mouths saves our souls from trouble
61. Being slow to speak and guarding our tongues is a companion to being slow to anger, and that it is proof of our strength-Proverbs 16:32.
62. Job, in discussion with his three friends, said that he would not restrain his words, that he would speak his bitterness, that he would complain, and that he would give full vent about it. At the end of the book, when reproved by God, Job said that he would put his hand over his mouth, that he spoke things that he didn’t understand, too wonderful for him to know. He said he would hear, *now*-implying listening rather than unrestrained speech, and be instructed by God.
63. It is good to evaluate-Why am I saying what I am saying? This is discernment, which is wisdom in action.
64. Better is open rebuke, Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Proverbs 27:5-6
65. Sometimes we do have to say words that wound. God’s word is sharper than a two-edged sword that pierces deeply. It hurts to cut out sin.
66. Sometimes in relationships we have to say hard things to find the middle ground where we can meet together and recognize the battle grounds that we have to stay away from.
67. So we can’t make a blanket statement that we should never say words that hurt. We have a duty and obligation to say words that hurt in an effort to stop sin and to make peace. I get the idea from Proverbs 24:11-12 that this is someone who stands by silently watching someone get swallowed up by sin. Proverbs 25:26 creates the image that spoiled or polluted water (something that is essential to life) is equal to a righteous man who lets wickedness run its course without any attempt to stop it.
68. So again the question becomes, why are you saying what you are saying? Be honest with yourself. Don’t use the discussion as an excuse to vent under the guise of trying to solve a problem. A good question to ask is, “Would I appreciate someone saying that to me? What purpose would hearing that accomplish in my life?” or maybe if you have a hard time seeing that clearly, imagine saying those words to someone you have a close and healthy relationship with-would you feel uncomfortable or fearful of wounding them unfaithfully? The reasons for you saying what you are saying should be as transparent as what you are saying.
69. Understand that you are saying something hurtful and don’t pretend that you aren’t. Too often we try to couch hurtful words in compliments or justifiers and it seems ingenuine and the “buts” just makes those couching statements seem false. “I’m not trying to hurt your feelings, but…” “I’m not trying to speaking badly about \_\_\_\_, but…” Be transparent about understanding that this is hurtful (strengthen yourself to be able to bear that pain of another, don’t try to shoo it away), be transparent about why you are saying hurtful words, and offer the true and honest words that can bring peace and comfort even in the pain. If you can’t be transparent about why you are saying them, then maybe you need to think again about saying them.
70. What about processing out loud, working through issues and problems out loud rather than inside yourself? The Proverbs talk about the wisdom in having a multitude of counselors. There are times we do need to seek advice in difficult situations and relationships. Be careful who you do this with, you don’t want to put temptation in their way to gossip or speak evil of someone. Choose someone who isn’t afraid to say those hard things that need to be said-to you if needed! Safeguard questions to ask-Are you willing to listen to another perspective or are you just wanting to say what you have to say? Are you willing to listen to suggestions or do you just want to be heard? Are you willing to hear ways that you are thinking wrong or doing wrong? Would you be comfortable praying to God with the attitude you have in processing out loud with your husband or with a friend? Have you already prayed about this humbly before you have sought the opportunity to seek counsel? Are you wanting affirmation that you are right and they are wrong or rather are you looking for counsel in knowing how to show the wisdom from above in the situation? These will help you know why you are saying what you are saying. This is so hard!! Especially with the people that we are the closest to-our best friend, our husband, another close family member. But every word will be judged. Even in those close conversations! Constantly be telling yourself, swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath!
71. What is influencing you?
72. Proverbs about influences
73. Proverbs 14:7-leave the presence of a fool or you won’t be able to discern knowledge
74. Proverbs 22:24-25-do not associate with an angry person or you will learn his ways
75. Proverbs 17:4-an evil doer learns from evil doers’ words
76. Proverbs 20:19-don’t hang around with a gossip because she won’t keep your secrets!
77. Proverbs 26:1-2 gives a list of things that are not fitting, a lot of them are about giving honor or notice to a fool.
78. So then applying that to us, what things in your life are you paying attention to or giving honor to that is influencing you to be careless with your words?
79. People
80. Books
81. Music
82. Talk shows or radio
83. News articles
84. TV shows
85. Philosophies or worldly ideas that taint the way you process life that encourage you to be self-indulgent
86. Don’t limit this to just “cuss” words, think also about ideas presented, the purpose of these things-are they just to stir up strife, are they just to make you be discontent, are they encouraging the desires that you are trying to kill? The more you are listening to them, the more they are training your thoughts and putting words in your mouth.
87. In this era of 24 hour talk news tv and radio, Netflix binging, or Facebook ranting or Instagram soapboxes, we have ready made and easily accessible tools to cement lines of destructive thought trains that lead to destructive and careless words.
88. Be careful how you use them. They can be addicting. They can be in control of your words more than you and certainly more than the Lord.
89. Eliminate the ones that stir up or keep kindle the inward fires that are fueling your words.
90. Change your perspective on life
91. Many of the proverbs on speech are about the contentious woman. This is humbling to know that it is a common problem among women to be contentious.
92. We can maybe try to understand where this comes from. I think a lot of times it comes from bitterness or disappointment in unmet expectations. Proverbs 13:12
93. Goals and expectations are a little different. Goals are under your control, what you choose to work on and pursue in yourself. Expectations are outside of yourself, outside of your control, they are about circumstances a lot of the time.
94. When things then don’t turn out how we expected, we are disappointed and that happening continually can turn into bitterness. Proverbs 14:30-this passion here is really about a zeal or ardor to have something you don’t have. This is rottenness according to the Proverbs. It corrupts our hearts, and that corruption comes out in our words.
95. When we’ve been disappointed, sometimes that increases our fear that we will be disappointed again and it creates this anxiousness and fear within us. And that affects our hearts, and that affects our words, which are spoken from a position of fear or anxiety. Proverbs 12:25, Proverbs 15:13, Ps 37:8
96. Every life has sorrows and sufferings. We are told to “expect” this in the Scriptures (Acts 14:22, Mark 10:28-31, John 15:18, 16:33, 1 Thess 3:3-4, 2 Tim 2:3, 3:12, 1 Pet 2:20-21) . Remember the last point about influences-we look at others on social media and their life looks “picture perfect” and we fill in the blanks behind their picture and think they have this perfect life, and all of a sudden our totally normal life somehow feels like a failure.
97. That leads to the martyr syndrome or the victim mentality.
98. This leads to complaining, grumbling, irritability, frustration, criticizing, judging, envying others, strife, jealousy, anger, wrath, and all sorts of relationship problems that increase and feed that victim mentality.
99. We rather need to seek, put on, renew, and maintain, the victor mentality.
100. That the victory we have in Christ is so great that the sufferings of this day are nothing to be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us.
101. We should expect to suffer, not in a defeatist way, but in the way that James 1 and Romans 5 talks about that strengthens us and exercises our faith to be even stronger for the next battle. We are not being cheated or mistreated by God when we suffer in this life. But rather we are being molded and shaped by God into a better person. It is painful, and I’m not saying we shouldn’t hurt or even grieve over the hurt, but that we should go beyond grieving and look for the refinement.
102. We need to be the victor and not the victim in the big sufferings. Work on changing the perspective on the big sufferings and you will change our thoughts and words in the big sufferings.
103. But this is also true in the little ones as well. Practice calm thoughts and words to strangers-in the other cars on the road, in the aisle at the grocery store, looking on the same rack as you in the clothing store…
104. In those day to day annoyances that come from sharing a life with other flawed people-practice calm thoughts and words, knowing there are going to be problems, with your husband, children, brethren.
105. As a mother, an interesting idea is to read through Proverbs and think about all the “king” and “subject” passages. Apply them to “parent” and “child” situations. See you from your kids’ perspectives. It is humbling and should help you guard your tongue.
106. Use the little bumps in the road to train your thoughts and emotions and therefore your words. It is like making small steps of growth over a longer period of time. When the big hurricanes come, you will be more prepared, but also those big hurricanes are also big opportunities to make some big steps in growth in a short period of time.
107. It is hard, it is rough, but Jesus has already won the battle for you and has already defeated the enemy. We just have to behave like victors, not victims, in our heart, emotions, and words.
108. Finally, mind your own business.
109. We’ve kind of turned that into an insult or put down, but it is Biblical.
110. So many proverbs about speech are coupled with proverbs about laziness. It’s the idea that we are too busy talking and not busy working and if we were working we wouldn’t be talking and getting into trouble with our tongues. So mind your business, do your work, and let that occupy you rather than talking so much!
111. 1 Thess 4:11-This should be our ambition
     1. To lead a quiet life-not drama filled (remember that being drawn away by desires idea-too many times its curiosity (or nosiness) that leads to gossip. Rather than indulging in curiosity, desire a quiet life!
     2. Also with this is an idea that sometimes restrained speech and minding your own business may lead to some loneliness, or at least a less social life than gossips may have. Proverbs 19:1 sets forth the idea that it is better to have less and you’re your integrity. Accept that maybe a little social loneliness can be a part of restrained words.
     3. The next part of 1 Thess 4:11 is to attend to your own business and work with your hands. The context to this is to not expect others to support you financially while you don’t work. But we can see in 1 Peter 4:15-make sure that none of you suffers as a troublesome meddler. So I think from these passages we can take that principle of “you’ve got enough to be getting on with that you don’t need to be concerned about that” when it comes to the day to day minutia of other people’s lives.
     4. This means quit comparing their choices to your choices, quit judging what they do that is different from what you do, quit letting facebook and Instagram be sources of discontentment, frustration, envy, and jealousy because you’ve filled in the blanks of what you think their life is like and it’s not like yours!!
     5. All of these things fuel the fire to a lot of contentious, gossipy, ungrateful, complaining words that we as women are particular victims to. Get rid of that kindling for the fire that you can set with your words.

Conclusion: Words are hard. Sometimes we say things and we have no idea where they come from. That is exactly when we need to take those words as a symptom of a bigger heart problem and then work on that heart problem. Because the answer to the question-where did that come from? Is our heart.

1. Learn to love wisdom and hate foolishness. Make foolish words taste bitter in your mouth.
2. Learn to value self-restraint and see the danger in self-indulgence.
3. What is influencing your foolish words? Remove those influences.
4. How can you change your perspective to change your heart and in turn change your words? Be a victor not a victim.
5. Mind you own business, keep busy with good things to reduce the time you have for foolish words.