

**What to do When You Don't know What to Do
What Do We Say?
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Proverbs 13:3, MSG

We have more influence than we realize. Proverbs mentions the term, “**words**,” 29 references.

He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

(MSG) Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything.

Psalm 19:14 *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Conventional wisdom states women speak far more (maybe 2x as much) than men. A 2007 study claimed this was inaccurate that women speak only slightly more than men. Another 2013 study agreed with the conventional wisdom: women speak about 13,000 words per day while men speak about 1/2 that amount. One woman said, “Of course we speak twice as much as men – because since men don’t listen everything we tell them we have to tell them twice.”

One guy claims that the Book of Revelation says men get to heaven 30 minutes before women: ***When he opened the 7th seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. (Rev 8:1)***

This varies culture to culture and from individual to individual. Our first child, Joshua, seemed to speak the moment he came out of the womb. We were greatly worried about our 2nd born, Jessee, because she wouldn’t say anything. Our 3rd born, we have no idea. If you’ve had 3 or more kids, you know what I mean. At that point, the parents are outnumbered.

#1) **Careless** (Maybe what I just said would fit the category of “careless speech.”) Careless, rash, reckless, perverse, seductive speech may cause ruin. Speech has consequences. “Loose lips sink ships.” During World War 2 the warring countries tried to communicate with their servicemen and citizens to avoid careless talk about secure information that could aid the enemy. The most famous poster became part of a general campaign of American propaganda. The British equivalent used the phrases: “Keep Mum” and “Careless Talk Costs Lives.” The Germans propaganda said: “Shame on you, Blabbermouth.”

Careless talk is often called “Gossip,” which is an enemy in the Proverbs. A “Gossip” = someone who talks about others. A “bore” = someone who talks about themselves. A “Brilliant Conversationalist” = someone who listens to YOU.

Careless talk can be poisonous, dangerous, abusive and deadly. **Many a man's tongue broke his nose.** (Seamus MacManus). Mennonite quote (from Sean):

“Every Chance You Get – Shut Up!”

“If talking gets you into trouble, listening seldom does.”

It’s not only what we SAY, it’s HOW we say it. Voice inflection and body language can say more than the actual words used.

It’s not only what we SAY, it’s what we type on texts, emails and social media.

SNAP CHAT

Hit “delete” not “send.”

Some of us need to use fewer words or better words.

#2.) **Careful** – **“Better the feet slip than the tongue.”** (George Herbert) If we exercise caution, discipline, and discretion and exercise restraint in our speech, we make a good life.

Words are important. **Eccl 3:7 “There’s a time to be silent and a time to speak”**

There’s a time to speak up, too. Our words can be harmful or healing – like

medicine: **Prov 16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.**

Our words can have a huge impact and provide insight. Intentional – telling Jesse I was proud of her as a mom. Magic Ratio

How to be Careful:

#1.) Tame It James 3:3-12 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same

spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

“No man can tame the tongue.” This is very hard (impossible?) to do. Yet, the tongue isn’t the problem – the problem is the one who is piloting the ship. What we say reflects our hearts.

Why do we say the things we do? Envy/Jealousy are often the culprit. Pride and Anger, too. Greed will make us lie to protect/advance our financial interests. How do we tame it? Change the heart = change the speech. This is why we need scripture/prayer/Christian fellowship. Matt 12:34-36 *For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.*

#2.) Be aware of Self-Talk – what we say to ourselves – not to others. We are often unaware of this. These are the tapes we listen to. We have about 10 thoughts per minute, 600 thoughts per hour or between 9-10,000 thoughts per day. We think these things – but we don’t talk about them. We don’t normally think of this as speech but it has an enormous effect upon us. What do you tell yourself about your value as a person, about your perceptions? Pay attention to this – you’ll hear others refer to themselves in the 3rd person, too.

“My speech will reflect my Christian beliefs. I will witness to someone each week. I will have positive self-talk.” Not easy to do.

Previous to this is a note to witness. Faith-sharing is an important part of the faith. It doesn’t mean we preach to others. In David Kinnaman’s book Good Faith (who’s with us next Sunday) he writes: **“Good conversations don’t begin with proclamations but rather by meeting people right where they are.”** Listening and getting to know others = witnessing. It’s not always talking.

Our self-talk is often based on negative things – and it can unleash a power all its own which is very destructive. We can build up or tear down others/ourselves. Berating children. School. And not to flatter.

#3.) Action + truth 1 John 3:18 **Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.**

On the one hand, we are to use our words in godly ways – On the other hand, we are to be more than words. Integrity.

“Why?” should I live this way = Ultimate issue becomes one of Lordship. Who is the ultimate authority in life? Me or God? This impacts our speech/words. Col 3:17 *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.* This is about following Jesus.

Words matter. They have power. We have to be intentional. Monitor ourselves.

Ellen was an honor student in her Jr. class in High School. She was in the band and the secretary of her class. She had lots of potential. But someone started a rumor about Ellen – that she'd come home at daybreak in a drunken stupor, in disheveled clothes, with an older man in a fancy sports car. That was the rumor. The rumor took root and spread everywhere. Harsh jokes were told, profane wisecracks were made, gossip, whispering, and the pointed fingers. Ellen was a fragile, sensitive person. She couldn't take it any longer. Depressed, she took an overdose of sleeping pills. Her memorial service was held on what would've been her 17th birthday. The truth was that she'd spent all night at the hospital with her gravely ill grandmother, and her uncle had brought her home early the next morning. A neighbor saw her get out of the car with this older man, her uncle, and she jumped to conclusions and started the rumor.

Have you ever been the victim of destructive criticism, sarcasm, public or private ridicule, humiliation, hurtful nicknames, and betrayal of secrets, rumors or malicious gossip? How does that feel? It can have a powerful impact upon us. God created the heavens and the earth through words. God spoke and the world came into existence. Words are powerful enough to create, heal and to lead to love. But they can also have a dark side which leads to hatred and terrible pain. There's probably no area of life in which we so systematically violate The Golden Rule. Negative comments we make can wound both the person who is absent from the conversation and the one who is present.

If someone couldn't go 24 hours w/o a drink, they'd be an alcoholic. If someone couldn't go 24 hours w/o smoking, they'd be addicted to nicotine. If you can't go 24 hours w/o saying unkind words about others, you've lost control over your tongue.

Try monitoring your speech for 24 or 48 hours. If you say something negative about someone make a note of it...or when someone else does so.