

*"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."
- Matthew 12:34*

The words we use hold immense power for potential abuse. Weaponized speech can hurt as much as a physical wound, and the damage may last longer. In moments of emotion, it may seem like our tongues keep galloping along no matter how hard we might tug on the reins (James 3:3-5).

The Bible repeatedly addresses the destruction that comes from sinful speech. Not only can words do harm to others, sinful words create trouble for the one speaking them (Proverbs 21:23). A righteous person thinks before speaking (Proverbs 15:28; 29:20), refrains from speaking deceitfully (1 Peter 3:10) and understands that every word spoken will be examined (Matthew 12:36). Words on our lips spill over from the fullness of our hearts (Matthew 12:34). Because of the great weight given to our words, we must make certain that everything we say, as well as the way it is said, honors Christ (Colossians 3:17).

Prayer prompt: Read James 3:3-12. Then take some time to honestly, thoughtfully and carefully reflect on the following questions from the book *Returning to Holiness* by Gregory Frizzell as well as the corresponding verses for each question. As you read, think and pray, if God convicts you of anything related to sins of speech, confess those sins to him, repent, and then thank him for his faithfulness to forgive (1 John 1:9).

- **Are your words used to build others up in a graceful way or tear others down in a harsh manner? (Ephesians 4:29).**
- **Do you use crude and inappropriate language (Ephesians 5:3-4).**

- **Do you ever lie? Do you follow through with promises, vows and commitments you make to God and others? (Colossians 3:9).**
- **Is your tendency to speak with negativity and gripe and complain about situations in your life? (1 Corinthians 10:10).**
- **Are you guilty of critical, angry or unkind speech? Do you argue and fight with others verbally? Does your speech reflect an underlying anger or impatience with those around you? (Ephesians 4:31).**
- **Do you enjoy sharing gossip or condone it by keeping silent and listening? (1 Timothy 5:13).**
- **Do you act as a "self-appointed" critic and judge in order to set everyone else straight? (1 Corinthians 1:10).**

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

- Isaiah 6:5

The true test of a man's spirituality is not his ability to speak, as we are apt to think, but rather his ability to bridle his tongue.

- R. Kent Hughes