

You are What You Speak

By Mary Kane

One of the biggest challenges I face in my walk with the Lord is the control of my tongue. I have a very hard time being kind to those who are rude to me. It is easy to be gracious with the gracious. But, I am very quick to pay back rudeness with rudeness, especially with those who I have to deal with on a daily basis. Many times I have thought erroneously, "Lord, I would have such great control of my tongue if it wasn't for *So and So*." Perhaps like me you've



thought, "Lord, remove *So and So* from my life so I can be righteous. If I can avoid her today, then I will have control of my tongue." However, avoiding *So and So* does not prove that I have control over my mouth—it just camouflages my weakness. By simply avoiding the challenging people in my life, my lack of control over my mouth remains quietly hidden, like a deadly poison, waiting to be released when the next *So and So* comes along. How often I have resented others and blamed them for the iniquity of my mouth. As I was reflecting on my struggle with self-control, a Still Small Voice spoke to my heart and said, "*So and So* is not the problem, she is the tool I use to reveal the real problem—your heart."

God allows challenging people to come into our lives to show us our flaws so we can repent and turn to Him; they are the tools that He uses to knock off the rough edges of our character, and sculpt us into the image of Christ.

Please take a moment and confess to God any sin that He brings to mind and ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

Please read Psalm 19:14

Please write Psalm 19:14 in the space provided:

What should be acceptable in God's sight?

Our words and our thoughts. We are responsible for the words we speak and the thoughts we think. When I was a young Christian I fully agreed with the first half of this statement—I am responsible for my words. But, I used to think that I was a victim of my thoughts. My untrained mind used to aimlessly wander from one rabbit trail of day-dreaming to another. Many of these thoughts were not pleasing to God, but I thought I had no control over them. I did not understand that because I had very little control over my thoughts I also had very little control over my words.

The original Hebrew word used for *meditations* in Psalm 19:14 is *higgayown*. *Higgayown* means "to meditate, to muse, to plot." Interestingly, *higgayown* also means "resounding music, with sounding music upon the lyre." The meditations of our heart play like a melody over and over again bathing our thoughts and actions for the good or bad pending on the melody we are singing. This is the reason we must guard our heart above all things because it will direct the course of our words, actions and habits. Like a song that "gets stuck in our heads," our thoughts play over and over, influencing our behavior.

As we dig a little deeper into *higgayown*, another connection between our words and our hearts is revealed. *Higgayown* is derived from the root word *hagah* which means "to moan, to speak, to utter, to growl, to mutter." As per our definition, the act of meditation itself will cause us to speak the contents of our heart.

Now let's consider the concept of *words* for a moment. The Hebrew word for *words* used in verse 14 is *emer* which means "speeches, words, sayings, commands, promises."

Please take a moment to think and make a list of all the different ways you used your words today:

I used my words to instruct, to command, to convey displeasure, to relate, problem solve, pray, to correct, give grace, to memorize scripture and to give thanks. Now, please answer a very important question:

In every situation listed above, were your words pleasing to God?

If not, how could you make them pleasing next time?

What exactly does it mean to be *pleasing to God*? In order to gain a little insight about the word *pleasing* we must consider its original meaning in Hebrew. While researching this word, I discovered that in order for something to be *pleasing* to God, it must be "according to His will." There is an important connection between pleasing God and lining up our thoughts, words and actions to His will. In order for my words to be pleasing to God, I must long to do His will with my words. If my goal is to destroy, criticize, vent anger, condemn, or prove someone wrong so I can be proven right, then God will not be pleased with my words.

2 Tim 3:16 and Ephesians 4:28 tell us how to use our words in a way that is pleasing to God. Please read these two verses and answer the following questions:

As Christians, what kinds of words should we speak?

Describe the manner in which we should always speak.

What attitudes, thoughts and actions are pleasing to God?

Glance back at our verse again. Let's consider for a moment the phrase "in Your sight." The Hebrew word for *sight* used in this verse transliterates as *paniym*. *Paniym* means "faces, presence, person, before the face of. According to the original language, I understand *paniym* to mean not so much *sight* as *presence*. As Born Again believers in Christ we are always in His Presence. God hears my conversations and knows my thoughts, therefore I need to ask: Are the words I'm speaking and the thoughts I'm thinking putting myself in a position to enjoy God's presence; or will He turn from me because my thoughts or words are offensive to Him?

As we have already read in Psalm 19:14, God doesn't desire just acceptable *words*. It is possible to keep one's mouth shut, smile and all the while think negative thoughts about another person. God desires that our thoughts be pleasing to Him as well. If our thoughts aren't under control, our mouths won't be for long either; what is in the heart will spill out on the tongue. In truth, sinful speech habits do not indicate just a mouth problem or just a thought problem—according to Scripture they indicate a heart problem.

Let's examine Matthew 12:34-35.

According to Matthew 12:34-35, why couldn't the Pharisees speak good things?

They couldn't speak good things because their hearts were evil.

How does a good man speak good things?

A good man speaks good things because of the good treasure that is stored in his heart.

Where does this “good treasure” of Matthew 12:34-35 come from? Isn’t treasure extremely expensive and rare? How can an average person store up treasures? Does one have to be rich and wealthy in order to speak in a manner that is pleasing to God? In order to answer these questions we must take a look at the original language of this text.

First, please describe what you think of when you hear the word *treasure*:

The original Greek word for *treasures* in this passage of Scripture is *thesaurus* which means “the place in which good or precious things are collected and laid up, things laid up in a treasury.” There is no specific mention of jewels, gold or silver; just “good and precious” things. Two things stand out to me concerning this definition:

- 1. The treasure is purposely collected and stored away.** Effort had been put into seeking and saving the treasured items. The treasure did not jump into the treasury of its own power.
- 2. There is no mention of gold, silver or jewels.** The treasure is anything that is good or precious in the sight of God. God’s Word is a treasure that we need to store up in our hearts.

What kinds of things are you storing up in your heart? Are you collecting bitterness or treasures? You do have a choice about what you are storing away in your heart.

Imagine that you have a fireproof safe in your house in which to store valuable items. What kinds of things would you gather to store in your safe?

In my fireproof safe I'd store cards, love letters and dried flowers that my husband has given me; baby booties, little scribbly pictures and funny cards my sons have made me through the years, favorite toys my boys played with and loved; my grandmother's tea set, photographs and videos of our family; and if possible, my walk with Christ, and the memories of many family vacations, parties, conversations and everyday dinners shared around the kitchen table over the years with family and friends. My heart is already brimming over with love and gratitude as I think of the many blessings that God has brought to my life.

Now, imagine filling the safe with hurtful words that people have said to you, with videos of family fights and arguments, snap shots of those who cut you off on the highway or in the line at the grocery store, recordings of complaints and criticisms aimed in your direction and a well used DVD of regrets and mistakes.

What thoughts and feelings would surface in your heart if you reviewed the contents of this safe on a daily or weekly basis?

If you are storing up bitter words and hurtful incidences in your heart, why do you want to purposely save these memories forever? May I gently suggest a reason? Because you do not trust God to take care of your hurts; you want to remember every wound and slight, in living color, so you can exact payment, with interest from the ones who have hurt you. The reason I can humbly suggest this to you is because God recently revealed this same attitude in my own heart. He let me see that I didn't believe Him on two important issues: 1) I didn't believe that He would work all things for my good, and 2) that vengeance belongs to the Lord only. He is in charge of dealing with those who have hurt me.

God also showed me that I want grace from those whom I have hurt, while I mete out condemnation on those who have hurt me. When I choose to harbor hurtful memories they turn to bitterness.

Please write Hebrews 12:15 in the space provided:

What happens when I fail to show grace to others?

Bitterness takes root in my heart "springs up" in my speech.

Let's do a bitterness check by answering the following questions (Rate yourself seldom, sometimes, often).

1. When driving, I yell, shout, curse, etc. at other drivers for the least perceived infraction. _____.
2. In the checkout line at the store, I argue with anyone who purposely or unknowingly cuts in front of me _____.
3. I often argue with my spouse; unwilling to concede the smallest point. _____.
4. I like to recount to my family and friends how someone mistreated me and how I took care of the situation. _____.
5. I complain and gossip about friends, family and coworkers. _____.

If you are like me, you found some bitterness stored up in your heart. How then do we get rid of our bitterness? Ephesians 4:31-32 supplies the answer.

What other attitudes accompany bitterness?

What is the result of all these attitudes?

Evil speaking is the result. Again, we see the connection between the heart and the tongue.

What are we to do with these negative attitudes?

We are to “put them away” from ourselves. We have a choice about bitterness; we can choose to keep the bitterness in our hearts or we can choose to “put it away.” The original Greek word used for *put away* is *airo* which means “to lift, to take upon oneself and carry what has been raised, to take away what has been attached to anything, to grant pardon for an offense.” Sometimes we can become *attached* to the bitterness we harbor in our hearts; we may even enjoy complaining and grumbling about the trials we have faced and those who have hurt us. How exactly do we “put away” bitterness, wrath and evil speaking? By granting pardon...by choosing to forgive others, ourselves and... possibly God. When we choose to forgive, we no longer require that others pay for their sins against us; we trust that God will take care of any outstanding debt. We also stop condemning ourselves for our own mistakes and sins and we stop blaming God for the hurt that has come into our lives. When we forgive others and rid ourselves of bitterness in our hearts we are free to bless others and speak goodness into their lives.

Whom do you need to forgive?

If it is appropriate and wise to do so, how can you speak goodness into his or her life?

What can you do to start speaking goodness and hope into your own life?

Whenever you become aware of bitterness creeping into your heart and mind, speak a Bible verse into your situation and pray for God to fill your heart with His goodness (I often use is Romans 12:19, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but [rather] give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance [is] Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.").

In closing, we must remember the importance of words. God spoke the world and planets into existence; Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones and they lived; Jesus spoke and Lazarus rose from the dead. Our words reveal what is in our hearts. If we find we are speaking condemnation and bitterness to those around us, we must consciously choose to fill our hearts with grace and righteousness. May we always use our words to speak life into our families, friends and circumstances.

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