

SRM14084

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“The Perfect Ten #7: God's Tongue-Control Law”  
Deuteronomy 5:20

Attention: How many of you were taught as a child, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me”?

How many have in your life been deeply hurt by the words of others?

How many are aware of having hurt someone else with words?

ILL: To appreciate the power of the tongue, we need only picture the people of Great Britain in the early days of World War II, gathered in their living rooms listening to Prime Minister Winston Churchill deliver one of the most stirring speeches of the war: "The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us.... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: 'This was their finest hour.'" The heroism so evident in Britain's battle against Nazi Germany may have lain dormant in the British people had not Churchill's words helped galvanize their will. [Topic: Words, Subtopic: Wise, Index: 3297]

We all know that words can be tremendously destructive, but they can also be constructive.

The 9th Commandment is "God's Tongue-control Law": Exo 20:16 and Deu. 5:20 (NKJV) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

It has both a negative and a positive side to it, but remember that it is not just about how to have good relationships with other people. The premise of all the Commandments is Deuteronomy 5:6 (NKJV) “I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”

Therefore, whenever we think of the good or bad use of words, we need to remember who invented them and who uses them the most powerfully: God Himself at creation and in regeneration.

Look at what God did with them: With words He made all things, gave privilege & guidance to the human race, and when man sinned, He promised a Savior. He sustained His people with words of Grace, Truth & faithfulness,

And as the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ is the best qualified to show us how to use them. The “good news” of the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ alone has the power to make your words helpful rather than harmful.

1. Harmful tongues are one of God's top ten moral problems.

The commandment applies, of course, to false testimony under oath in court, but also much more.

A. It applies to control of the tongue in general. Note the words of James 3:2-10 (NKJV) "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."

We break the 9th Commandment whenever we use our tongue to destroy another person.

This includes lying, but also specific forms of dishonesty that destroy other people.

You and I do this when we lie to them, lie about them, lie for them, or lie along with them.

God never does any of these, nor has Jesus.

The Baptist Catechism, Question 84: What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

Answer: The ninth commandment forbids whatever dishonors truth, or injures our own, or our neighbor's good name.

B. The 9th is broken by slander or "talebearing". Lev 19:16 (NKJV) "You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: [notice why] I am the LORD."

We break it by creating false impressions, remaining silent when you hear someone casting aspersions on another's character, or by flattery.

C. The 9th is also broken when you condemn another person.

Mat. 7:1-5 (NKJV) "Judge not [krino= condemn], that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?"

Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Rom. 14:10-12 (NKJV) But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Rom 2:1 (NKJV) Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things ...[21-24] You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

On the other hand, The Baptist Catechism, Question 83: What is required in the ninth commandment?

Answer: The ninth commandment requires that we maintain and promote truth between persons and that we preserve the good name of our neighbor and ourselves.

In his *Instructions for our Most Important Battle*, Bill Gothard gives 8 tests to evaluate what you say, based in Phil 4:8 (ESV) "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

All of these are characteristics of God's use of words: When you speak, can you say that, like God, your thoughts and words meet this test?

1. It is true: Will it give an accurate impression?
2. It is honorable or noble. Should it be imitated by others?
3. It is just, right, proper. Is it appropriate to say at this time?
4. It is pure. Is it motivated by pride, selfishness or any such motive?
5. It is lovely. Ask, "Will it brighten the lives of all who hear it?"

6. It is commendable. "Will it damage anyone's reputation?"

7. It is excellent. "Will it motivate others to godly living?"

8. It is praiseworthy. "Will it edify all who hear it?"

Trans: Harmful tongues are one of God's top ten moral problems. The forces of evil work to see that our words are destructive, but God uses words as a powerful weapon for good.

2. God has made it possible for people like you and me to transform our harmful words into helpful ones.

Why are disciples of Christ so concerned about this Commandment?

A. Because helpful words are godly; compliance reflects the character of the triune God:

Father: Num 23:19 (NKJV) "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Son: John 18:37 (ESV) Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to

bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Holy Spirit: John 16:13 (NKJV) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

B. We want to speak the truth because lies are destructive.

Proverbs 13:3 (NKJV) He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

e.g. Racial lies have been responsible for oppression, genocide and indifference to the suffering of women, Jews, Blacks, Asians, etc.

C. Lies separate us from God. Psa. 15:1-3 (NKJV) LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

D. We should speak truth because it is Christlike.

John 1:17 (NKJV) “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

“I am the way, the truth ...”. Jesus told the truth in ways that hurt at times, but were intended to bring people into the circle of His love.

e.g. Woman at the well, Pharisees.

F. Christ’s disciples speak truth because truth opens the way to God's love.

1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV) This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 2:9 (NKJV) He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

1 John 4:20 (NKJV) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

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people like you and me to transform our harmful words into helpful ones.

3. Some practical helps for tongue-control.

A. Begin in your Spirit.

Without repentance and faith in Christ you cannot even begin.

God's most important words of love for you are Romans 6:23 (NKJV) “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Once you have turned you life over to Christ, you have in you the power of the Holy Spirit to have a "death and life experience: Romans 8:13 (NKJV) “If you live according to the flesh [the sinful nature] you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

1. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you put to death the old, me-centered way of speaking.

2. The new life and way of speaking is received by living in the Spirit of Christ to the glory of God.

B. Ask Christ to bring your mind, will and emotions into line with His perfect, and truthful Words of Love.

Ask Christ to make you a guardian of the reputation of the people around you by...

1. Telling no lie about them.
2. Avoiding being a bearer of the errors of others.
3. When you know something bad about someone from his past, that he has repented of and has been forgiven, "Don't mention it"

Before you speak, stand in the presence of God.

Alan Redpath reported, "I once formed a mutual encouragement fellowship at a time of stress in one of my pastorates. The members subscribed to a simple formula applied before speaking of any person or subject that was perhaps controversial.

T -- Is it true?

H -- Is it helpful?

I -- Is it inspiring?

N -- Is it necessary?

K -- Is it kind?

Arm the Holy Spirit with memorized Scripture.  
[Gothard's 12 Tongue Tamers, Alum Sup #2, p. 6]

Proverbs 13:3 (NKJV) He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

Proverbs 29:20 (NKJV) Do you see a man hasty in his words? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 18:13 (NKJV) He who answers a matter before he hears *it*, *It is* folly and shame to him.

Matthew 12:36 (NKJV) But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Ephesians 4:25 (NKJV) Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Eph. 4:29 (NKJV) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Proverbs 15:23 (NKJV) A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word *spoken* in due season, how good *it is!*

Proverbs 21:23 (NKJV) Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:4 (NKJV) A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Proverbs 17:28 (NKJV) Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; *When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.*

1 Peter 3:10 (NKJV) For *"He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.*

James 1:26 (NKJV) If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless.

Ask Jesus Christ to change your heart so you seek to use your tongue to give only reports that are admirable. When you cannot, go to that person first.

You cannot do this by sheer will & resolve. It takes Prayer, self denial, obedience and "looking to Jesus."