

Speech, Language, & the Tongue: What Does the Bible Say about Cursing, Profanity, and Obscenity?

"Four-letter words" are increasingly common in our society. Many movies, books, and television shows are filled with them.

Proverbs 10:32 observes: "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse." Many people know what speech is proper and what is improper. But since many apparently do not, let us consider three kinds of speech that are Biblically improper.

The first is cursing. Cursing involves stating that we wish harm would come to someone. Romans 12:14 says: "Bless and do not curse."

A second form of immoral speech is profanity: the act of treating sacred things without proper reverence or respect. This often involves taking God's name in vain or using other Bible words in very unbiblical ways! Exodus 20:7 forbids taking God's name in vain. 1 Timothy 1:9 says that profanity is contrary to sound doctrine. Those who love God will speak with respect for His name and all that is sacred.

A third form of unacceptable speech is obscenity: words or expressions that are intended to arouse improper sexual excitement or lust, such as suggestive jokes or use of terms that are offensive to decency. Ephesians 5:4 calls such speech "filthiness." Galatians 5:19 calls it "licentiousness," and says that those who practice it will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Evil speech can be forgiven by the blood of Jesus, but those who come into Christ must lay aside "all evil speaking" - 1 Peter 2:1.

"BE CAREFUL LITTLE TONGUE WHAT YOU SAY"

INTRODUCTION: This is one of the lines from a little children's song that we often teach our kids and sometimes sing it during Vacation Bible School. We think of it as a "kids' song" but it is far more than that! We should be very careful what our tongue speaks! The uncontrolled tongue is especially harmful and dangerous to the body of Christ.

BODY

I. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CONTROLLING THE TONGUE?

A. The Old Testament warns us about avoiding gossip and evil speaking.

1. Leviticus 19:16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

2. Psalm 50:16-20

3. Proverbs 20:19 He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

B. The New Testament tells us to put away the wicked use of the tongue.

1. Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

2. Titus 3:1-2 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

II. WHY IS AN UNCONTROLLED TONGUE SO DANGEROUS?

A. Because words rashly spoken can have serious consequences.

1. Jephthah made a rash vow with an uncontrolled tongue which caused him great grief.

a. Judges 11:30-40

2. It was because of rash speaking that King Herod ended up having John the Baptist beheaded, even though Herod did not want it done.

a. Mark 6:22-28

B. Because it will affect the lives of individuals for a lifetime.

1. James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

2. It hurts the person you are talking about, his/her family, friends, neighbors, etc. It can affect them for a lifetime.

3. Proverbs 26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

C. A man who has an uncontrolled tongue brings pain and hurt upon himself.

1. Proverbs 21:23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

2. 1 Peter 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

D. It makes our religion useless in the sight of God.

1. James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

III. GOSSIP AND MURMURING IS ESPECIALLY HARMFUL TO A CONGREGATION OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE!

A. The Scriptures speak of the kind of person that will gossip and speak evil among God's people.

1. Titus 1:9-11 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

B. Murmuring against the church and its work is destructive to the body and earns the displeasure of Jehovah God.

1. God showed his displeasure at His people murmuring in the Old Testament.

a. Exodus 15:24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

b. Exodus 16:2

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

c. Numbers 11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

d. Numbers 14:26-27 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

2. 1 Corinthians 10:10-11 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

3. Philippians 2:14-15 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

4. Jude 1:14-16 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are

ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

CONCLUSION: "I am more deadly than the screaming shell of the cannon. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name is Gossip."