

Taming the Tongue

If you have wounded others with your tongue over a period of months or years, following repentance you will likely need to begin speaking words that heal.

Paul David Tripp in his book *War of Words* offers some helpful points as we battle the unbridled tongue.

1. *Winning the war involves recognizing the destructive power of words* (Galatians 5:15). Paul warns us watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. God has ordained us to be people of influence husband influences wife and vice versa. Parents influence children. Friend influences friend. Paul reminds us that what we say has consequences. We are always representing the Lord. It is never OK to communicate in ways that contradict his message, methods, and character. God says we will give an account of every careless word (Matthew 12:36).
2. *Winning the war means affirming our freedom in Christ* (Galatians 5:13). Self-indulgent, sin-indulgent talk contradicts our identity as the children of grace. It turns us back toward the very bondage from which we have been freed. It forgets the position we have been given by Christ and the power he has given us by his spirit.
3. *Winning the war means saying no to the sinful nature* (Galatians 5:13, 24). In exhorting as not to indulge the sinful nature, Paul summarizes a powerful gospel reality that we do not want to mess. He says, “those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (verse 24). The master of my sinful nature over me has been forever broken in Christ. As we indulge the sinful nature we will tend to personalize what is not personal and turn moments of ministry into moments of irritation and anger. We will strike back at those we are meant to serve in order to satisfy ourselves. Self-indulgent talk never accomplishes God’s purposes.
4. *Winning the war means speaking to serve others in love* (Galatians 5:13-14). We are called to put off self-indulgent talk to put on talk that flows out of a love for others. The picture in this passage is of a God who is relentlessly at work by his spirit, conforming his people to the image of his son. He wants to use us to accomplish that purpose. This is part of my calling each time I speak.
5. *Winning the war means speaking “in step with the spirit”* (Galatians 5:25). Keeping in step with the spirit means speaking in a way that reflects his work and me and encourages his work and you. Speaking in step with the spirit not only means speaking in a way that reflects what the spirit is doing in me but also encouraging the spirits fruit in you.
6. *Winning the war means speaking with a goal to restore* (Galatians 6:1-2). Paul says, “brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently...). Winning the war of words means speaking redemptively and speaking redemptively is rooted in a restoration perspective on relationships the purpose of human relationships is not human happiness. It is the work of reconciling people to God and restoring them to the image of his Son. When we remember that we are what we are because of God’s mercy alone, we speak with gentleness and humility as God’s restorers. How often our talk to one another lacks this gentleness and humility!

So, we see:

1. The Tongue Defiles. Jesus said that in Matthew 15 and James says it here in the beginning of chapter 3. The tongue defiles and it shows the defilement of the heart.
2. The Tongue Defies. It defies every attempt at human control. New Year's resolutions don't work.
3. The Tongue Displays. It displays what you really are. On the drive home will your family know that you are a gracious child of God? If you go out to eat somewhere, will your server know that you are a gracious child of God? With those around you in your home testify that your tongue is under control. That is the real test.

The Tongue Reveals the Heart

James describes the tongue and the mouth as representatives of the depravity and wretchedness of the inner person. The tongue only produces what it is told to produce by the heart, where sin originates (James 1:14–15).

Words Expressed	Heart Condition Revealed
Harsh	Anger
Negative	Fear
Talkative/Overactive	Unsettled/Lack of Peace
Criticize	Bitterness
Filth	Impure
Boasting	Insecure
Encouraging/Singing	Happy
Gentle	Tender
Truthful	Honest
Kind	Loving