

## The Importance of Controlling the Tongue

### I. Introduction

Jordan, who claimed to be a Christian, prided himself on thinking deeply about what faith and Christian freedom truly meant. Jordan attended church every Sunday, read Scripture faithfully, and sought to live a genuine Christian life. Yet, among his friends and colleagues, Jordan was known for using language that others sometimes found shocking—words usually considered off-limits to one who claims to be a Christian.

One afternoon, after a lively discussion at Bible study, a friend gently asked, "Jordan, do you ever think our words matter? Some of the things you say—well, they're a bit strong." Jordan smiled, undeterred. "I get where you're coming from," he replied. "But I don't think words have some magical power on their own. Aren't words just sounds that cultures decide to label as good or bad? In some countries, the words we find offensive don't mean anything at all. And anyway, isn't our liberty in Christ supposed to set us free from legalism—even in our speech?"

Jordan went on to explain, "Paul says all things are lawful, though not all things are beneficial. If my words are meant to express truth, humor, or even frustration, isn't it more important where my heart is? I don't mean to harm anyone. Besides, isn't policing language just another kind of empty tradition?"

His friends listened with mixed reactions—some contemplative, others unsettled. But for Jordan, the matter seemed clear: words were tools, culturally loaded but ultimately neutral. Christian liberty, in his view, meant he could speak as he pleased, provided he spoke honestly and without malice.

1. What do you think about Jordan's argument?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Should believers use cuss words? Why or why not?

3. Jordan made the comment that his words don't matter as much as where his heart is. What do you make of his comment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Jordan's friend Larry does not use swear words around other people, but he does use profanity when he is by himself. But if someone is in earshot, when he gets angry or loses his temper, he will just say these words in his head. What do you think about Larry's position on using language? Is he right?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Bob, another one of Jordan's friends, does not use swear words at all. He has never had the habit of using cuss words and is not even tempted to do so when he loses his temper. Therefore, Bob thinks that he has his tongue under control because he does not use bad language. Is Bob correct? Is simply not using profanity proof that we have a controlled tongue?

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*The purpose of this lesson is to outline four reasons for controlling the tongue in order to clarify the significance of self-control in speech.*

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## II. Why is it so Important to Control Your Tongue?

### a. Because the \_\_\_\_\_ way to sin is with your \_\_\_\_\_.

*Psalm 50:19 - You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit.*

*Psalm 64:2-4 - Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the throng of evildoers,<sup>3</sup> who whet their tongues like swords, who aim bitter words like arrows,<sup>4</sup> shooting from ambush at the blameless, shooting at him suddenly and without fear.*

6. Are there restraints to what you want to say when you choose to speak?

7. What restraint is there to do anything you want to do?

8. Why do we sin most easily with our tongue?

### b. Because an uncontrolled tongue will destroy \_\_\_\_\_.

*Proverbs 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts....*

*Proverbs 25:23 - The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.*

*Proverbs 26:28 - A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.*

9. Excluding the use of profanity or other inappropriate language, in what ways can language negatively impact relationships?

10. How can unspoken words or silence also be harmful?

*Ephesians 4:29-32 – Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

11. How do we know what kind of words are “corrupt talk”?

12. According to verse 31, what kind of speech should we put off? What should we replace that speech with?

13. If believers would obey these verses how would husband/wife relationships be different? Parent/children relationships? Relationships within the church?

**c. Because true believers will be \_\_\_\_\_ by their tongue.**

14. What does it mean to be “justified”?

Objection 1 - Doesn't Romans 4 tell us that believers are justified by faith alone and not by what we do or say? - Yes!

*Romans 4: 1-5 - What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." <sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup>And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.*

15. On what ground are we justified before God?

Objection 2 - How then can true believers be justified by their tongue?

*James 2:20-22 - Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.*

16. On what ground are we justified before man? In other words, what proof do we have that someone has been justified (declared righteous) by God and is saved?

Answer - The words we choose to speak are proof of the sanctifying work that God is doing in our hearts through salvation. This is because the mouth reveals what is inside the heart.

*Matthew 12:33-36 - "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup>You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup>The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil*

*person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. <sup>36</sup>I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, <sup>37</sup>for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*

17. What is the correlation between the fruit of trees and the words spoken by our mouths that come from the heart?

*James 1:26 – If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.*

18. What does an unbridled tongue do to a person who claims to be saved?

**d. Because true believers must have a \_\_\_\_\_ tongue.**

Objection – If the tongue speaks of what is in the heart, and God by his grace cleanses the heart of sin, then I should not have to worry about what I say.

19. How would you answer this objection? What verses would be helpful in your response?

### **III. Conclusion**

We should give careful consideration to how we speak for these reasons. First, we sin most easily with our tongues. Second, these sins against each other will destroy our relationships. Third, the words we use demonstrate to others the condition of our heart and whether we are in Christ. And last, if it is God's will for believers to be sanctified, then our tongues also must follow in that pattern.