



watch your mouth

**TONY EVANS**



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the HCSB®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. HCSB® is a federally registered trademark of Holman Bible Publishers.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

*Cover by Bryce Williamson*

## WATCH YOUR MOUTH

Copyright © 2016 Tony Evans

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6060-1 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6061-8 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Evans, Tony, 1949- author.

Title: Watch your mouth / Tony Evans.

Description: Eugene, Oregon : Harvest House Publishers, 2016.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016000195 (print) | LCCN 2016004707 (ebook) | ISBN

9780736960601 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780736960618 ()

Subjects: LCSH: Oral communication—Religious aspects—Christianity. |

Rhetoric—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Language and

languages—Religious aspects—Christianity. | Mouth—Miscellanea.

Classification: LCC BV4597.53.C64 E93 2016 (print) | LCC BV4597.53.C64

(ebook) | DDC 241/.672—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016000195>

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

**Printed in the United States of America**

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 / BP-CD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# contents

---

Introduction .....	5
--------------------	---

## **PART 1: The Power of the Tongue**

1. Dynamite in Your Dentures .....	13
2. Lord of Your Lips .....	31
3. God in Your Gums .....	47
4. Power in Your Palate .....	59
5. Victory in Your Voice .....	71
6. Wisdom in Your Words .....	87
7. Ministry in Your Mouth .....	97
8. Thanksgiving in Your Throat .....	109

## **PART 2: Perils of the Tongue**

9. Judgment in Your Jaws .....	119
10. Evil in Your Esophagus .....	135
11. Satan in Your Speech .....	145
12. Dirt in Your Discourse .....	155

Conclusion .....	165
------------------	-----

Appendix 1: What the Bible Says About Our Words . . .	167
-------------------------------------------------------	-----

Appendix 2: Dr. Tony Evans and The Urban Alternative .....	193
---------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Notes .....	199
-------------	-----



# Introduction

**A** Greek philosopher once invited some very influential and powerful guests to his home for dinner two nights in a row. He told them he was going to provide them with the best possible meal on the first night and the worst possible meal on the second night.

When his guests arrived, the servant set before them a meal of smothered tongue. The guests asked why this would be considered the best possible meal.

The philosopher replied, “The tongue is what we use to bless people, communicate happiness, dispel sorrow, and remove despair. We also use it to help the fainthearted, inspire the discouraged, and uplift all mankind. The tongue is the best possible meal.”

The next night the guests returned to the philosopher’s home for dinner, this time expecting the worst possible meal. Yet once again the servants brought out smothered tongue. The guests were curious why the same entrée was served twice, and they asked how it could be so.

The philosopher replied, “With the tongue we break hearts, bring

curses, destroy reputations, promote discord, induce strife, and set wars in motion.”

In other words, you can use the very same thing to do good or to do evil. The same tool holds the power to do it all.

I’m sure you’ve heard the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That phrase is a lie. At some point in your life, you have undoubtedly been hurt by other people’s words. You have most likely also hurt people from time to time with your own words. Proverbs summarizes it this way:

From the fruit of his mouth a man’s stomach is satisfied;  
he is filled with the product of his lips.  
Life and death are in the power of the tongue,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs  
18:20-21).

The tool behind your teeth, the tongue, can influence your world for good or for bad. It can bring life, or it can bring death.

The mouth and the tongue not only take things in but also produce things that come out. It goes in both directions. Your words will provide a helping of life or a helping of death because life and death are in the power of the tongue.

## **Power to Heal, Power to Destroy**

In the book of Deuteronomy, we read of Moses speaking to the nation of Israel about this reality: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). When Moses says, “life and death,” he is not referring to killing people physically. He means they can choose to bring blessing or destruction through their choices, and that would include their choice of words.

Life is the enjoyment of the favor of God. Death is the removal of divine favor, leading to the death of a dream, the death of a relationship, or whatever. The same tool in your mouth can bring both. In a surgeon's skilled hand, a scalpel can help preserve life, but a criminal can use the same sharpened blade to bring death. A wise doctor can use a syringe to promote healing in a sick patient, but a drug pusher can use the same syringe to cause death.

You and I have the power to bring blessing or a curse upon each other and upon ourselves simply through our mouths—the ability to do both is found in it. You don't have to kill a person physically in order to ruin their life forever. Myriads of people have been wiped out by words. Proverbs 6:2 says, “You have been trapped by the words of your lips—ensnared by the words of your mouth.” Our words can trap us. They can get us into situations we never should have gotten into. They can bind us in commitments we never should have made. The tongue can heal, or it can harm: “The tongue that heals is a tree of life, but a devious tongue breaks the spirit” (Proverbs 15:4).

Far too many of us use our tongues flippantly to voice how we feel or what we think, but do we use it powerfully? Your tongue is a tool that can create blessing and breathe life—not only for yourself but also for those around you. But keep in mind, your tongue also has the power to bring death. We see both summarized in Proverbs 12:18: “There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” And again in Proverbs 13:3: “The one who guards his mouth protects his life; the one who opens his lips invites his own ruin.”

Since your tongue is such an incredibly powerful tool, you can imagine why your mouth is like a battleground between God and the devil. There is a war for your words because through your words come life or death. That's why I took the time to teach through the various aspects of the mouth and wrote about them here for you—so

that you will be equipped to use your mouth for good and discern when it could be used for evil.

Nuclear power can be very beneficial. We are able to improve our lives with this form of power by generating electricity, powering huge ships, and so on. Yet a nuclear bomb can also destroy an entire city. It can wipe out life altogether. The same is true for your mouth.

Unfortunately, though, many of us fail to realize how significant our speech really is. And so, over and over and over again, we speak words that bring ill health, death, and destruction. And then we wonder why we are depressed and hurting.

---

When God wanted to create something, He used words.

---

Speak life with your lips and watch life come about. When God wanted to create something, He used words. When Satan wanted to destroy something, he used words. Both of them used words in order to exercise their power. If you and I were to change the way we view our mouths and recognize the power of our words, we could literally change our lives for good. Just as you would be careful when handling a loaded gun, you would realize how important it is to be careful with a loaded mouth. You would ask yourself, “Am I bringing favor into this situation, or am I bringing a curse?” And then you would alter your speech accordingly so as to invite favor.

So crucial are our words that the psalmist writes, “LORD, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3). What does a guard do? He or she opens and shuts a door at the appropriate time. Essentially, the psalmist is asking God to station



a policeman at the entrance to his mouth. That sentry would let the psalmist know when to speak and when not to.

That's what it means to watch your mouth. Guard it. Police it. It is a powerful tool for both good and evil. Do a favor for yourself and everyone around you by using your mouth for good. Just how to do that is what we're going to be looking at through the pages of this book. I hope you'll be encouraged as much as I was when I studied this topic and prepared these teachings. When used rightly, your mouth is a strong asset in so many ways.

It's like the cowboy who was driving down the highway in his truck with his dog beside him and his horse in a trailer. He hit a corner too hard, and they all flipped. A policeman arrived at the scene shortly after it happened. He approached the horse and saw that it wasn't going to survive, so he sadly put down the horse to relieve it of its pain. Then he examined the dog and saw that it too was in agony and near death, so he put down the dog as well. After that he walked over to the cowboy and asked how he felt.

Seeing the policeman's gun still smoking, the cowboy quickly said, "I ain't never felt better!"

Your words can save your life!





Part 1

---

# *the power of the tongue*



## Dynamite in Your Dentures

In 1866, one invention changed the world forever. That was the year Alfred Nobel developed the first safe but powerful explosive—dynamite.

Until that time, people used either gunpowder or nitroglycerin to build roads or do any other construction project that required an explosive. The problem with gunpowder was its inefficacy—it was not powerful enough to do much except fire a bullet. The problem with nitroglycerine was a lot worse. Any little jiggle or agitation while transporting it (most often in liquid form) would cause an immediate explosion. The slightest spark could set it off without warning. Many construction workers and transportation specialists lost their lives simply by trying to get this flammable and volatile material to its intended destination.

But in 1866, just two years after his younger brother died in an accidental blast of nitroglycerine, Alfred Nobel—a young man fueled by his near obsession to do so—discovered a way to combine

nitroglycerine with a stabilizer, making it nearly impossible to detonate until intentionally triggered.

Alfred Nobel's dynamic invention paved the way for the rapid advance of the modern culture. Dynamite provided an unprecedented amount of safety and ability to develop the infrastructure so desperately needed.

With the new ease of transportation and usage, Nobel's dynamite quickly leveled areas where roads needed to be built or expanded. It provided access to areas that were previously unreachable and blew through once impenetrable mountainsides. It saved workers' lives and promoted a greater quality of life for those who benefited from increased access to goods, services, medicines, and so on.

Nobel's dynamite improved life and society on many levels. But on the other hand, it also brought destruction. Dynamite quickly became an accurate and deadly force as a weapon of war. In fact, Alfred Nobel himself spent a large portion of his time, energy, and money inventing various weapons that he believed could one day—due to their deadly effectiveness—end war altogether. He commented to his close friend and confidante, Austrian countess Bertha von Suttner, “Perhaps my factories will put an end to war sooner than your congresses: on the day that two army corps can mutually annihilate each other in a second, all civilized nations will surely recoil with horror and disband their troops.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite his desire to end war through the creation and refinement of weaponry, wars only increased. No one knows for certain his motivation, but just a year before he died, Alfred Nobel established the Nobel Peace Prize in his will. He specified that the annual award was to go to an individual who had clearly demonstrated “the most or the best work for fraternity among nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the promotion of peace congresses.”

Some speculate Alfred Nobel left his life's legacy of the Nobel

Peace Prize as a way to settle the score because his invention had brought so much destruction. One commented to Albert Einstein during a time of his own reckoning with regard to scientific advances that “Alfred Nobel invented an explosive more powerful than any then known—an exceedingly effective means of destruction. To atone for this ‘accomplishment’ and to relieve his conscience, he instituted his award for the promotion of peace.”<sup>2</sup>

Dynamite is a powerful thing. It can be used to bring people together, or it can be used to blow people apart. It can help make life better, or it can ruin someone’s life altogether. It is a powerful tool that can give life and take it.

---

You and I were created by God with access to an internal, explosive power that can construct or destroy.

---

We all have a similar power within ourselves. We have access to something so strong—for good or for evil—that we bring life or death into situations on a regular basis. What’s worrisome about this, though, is that most of us do not realize this power. And far too many of us let it ride roughshod over other people in our lives.

You and I were created by God with access to an internal, explosive power that can construct or destroy. It is the dynamite in our dentures—the tool known as the tongue.

## **The Muscle in Your Mouth**

Your greatest enemy is not in your home. Your greatest enemy is not on your job. Your greatest enemy is not that person at church who gets on your every last nerve. Your greatest enemy is in your own

mouth. That three-inch muscle in your mouth has more power to destroy your life, and to do it quickly, than anything or anyone else.

---

Your greatest enemy is in your own mouth.

---

If you grew up in a home similar to mine, your mom probably told you the same thing my mom told me: “Watch your mouth!” I would say something I probably shouldn’t have said, and my mom would march right over to me with a stern look and say, “Boy, you’d better watch your mouth!” Then, depending on what it was, she might tell me to go wash my mouth out with soap!

Have you ever had to wash your mouth out with soap? It’s disgusting—wiping that bar of soap on your tongue long enough to show your mom you actually did it. Your reflexes are making you gag, but you have to keep washing with the soap in order to get the job done. I know I didn’t have to do that twice—once was enough for me to learn that lesson!

But watching your mouth is an important lesson to learn because the mouth has the power to destroy everything in its path. Someone once said, “The tongue is a wet place, and it can slip easily.” You may be where you are today because someone spoke life into you. You may have had new roads and new opportunities created in your life because someone believed in you enough to speak words of life to you. Or you may be where you are right now because someone spoke things about you or to you that destroyed your dream, your hope, an expectation you had, or a relationship. Perhaps you have not yet



recovered from the dynamite blasts you were hit with as a child. You could still be seeking to rebuild what was torn down because of what someone said to you.

The muscle in your mouth is no small thing. In fact, some couples have gotten divorced or are contemplating divorce because of the sticks of dynamite that continue to blow up their relationship. As a pastor who counsels church members on a weekly basis, I know that some people have not spoken to members of their family for years because the blast was so big and the pain was so deep, they have been unable to recover.

God might not use soap on our tongues to steer us in the right direction concerning this critical source of life or death in our mouths, but He does ask us to use some salt. “Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person,” writes Paul (Colossians 4:6). Or if you don’t prefer salt, He suggests some honey: “Pleasant words are a honeycomb: sweet to the taste and health to the body” (Proverbs 16:24).

---

Whether you are talking to a family member, a coworker, a clerk at the store, or even to yourself, your words carry the DNA of life or death.

---

God has a lot to say about our speech. In fact, the apostle James uses the first 12 verses of the third chapter of his epistle to give the most extensive statement in Scripture on the subject. Why does James devote so much time on such a matter? Because, as you will discover as we study what God’s Word has to say concerning the power of your

words, what you choose to say is no small thing. Whether you are talking to a family member, a coworker, a clerk at the store, or even to yourself, your words carry the DNA of life or death.

Since James covers this topic clearly in his epistle, I thought it best to begin this book by looking at the words that came out of his mouth. He begins with a warning: “Not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). The first word out of the gate for James is a warning to people like myself and anyone else who seeks to disciple others according to the Word of God. I’m sure that includes you. Whether you are instructing your kids, helping a friend or family member, teaching a Sunday school class, or leading a small group, if you are yielding your life to the betterment of others, James gives you a strong warning to watch what you say—especially with regard to aligning your words underneath the comprehensive rule of God.

These days, social media makes it easy for people to offer their opinion on spiritual issues or things related to God’s Word. I recently noticed that one very famous Christian singer who has been leading worship for decades—a name you would probably recognize if I mentioned it—posted on his Facebook page that he no longer believes the Bible is the Word of God. He said believers had turned it into an idol by placing too much value on it. I was shocked.

Not too long ago, people who spoke publicly about spiritual matters were often trained theologians or studied ministers who had devoted years to prayer and reading. But through the increased connectivity and communication we all have with each other through the Internet, opinions are now tossed around as if they were studied conclusions. Yet James warns of such things, saying that anyone who sets himself or herself up to give spiritual instruction to others, whether formally or informally, “will receive a stricter judgment.”

---

We face a higher level of accountability anytime we bring God and His name into the conversation.

---

A teacher speaks with the mouth. But even what is written or posted online is a product of the mouth. And James begins by reminding us that if we are going to express God's viewpoint on a matter, we had better pay careful attention to what that is. We face a higher level of accountability anytime we bring God and His name into the conversation.

After James's initial warning, he continues his lesson about our lips by establishing three unique points regarding the mouth, highlighting its power to direct life, to damage life, and to determine life.

## **Directing Life**

James writes, "For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man who is also able to control his whole body" (James 3:2). He acknowledges that every person on the planet has made his or her share of mistakes. We have all stumbled in some way. But having made this broad statement, he goes on to instruct us regarding the person who does not stumble in what he says—that person, James tells us, is mature. People who can control what they say can also control the entire body.

---

If you will discover the secret of rightly ruling your mouth, you will gain the ability to rightly rule your actions as well.

---

Yes, we all stumble in a variety of ways—in our relationships, in our finances, on the job—but James points out that if you can learn how to control what you say, that ability will then impact what you do. In essence, James says, “Give your lips to God, and He will give you your life.” Or in other words, bridle your mouth, and the rest of you will follow.

Does anything seem to be going wrong in your life right now? If you will discover the secret of rightly ruling your mouth, you will gain the ability to rightly rule your actions as well.

Many believers today place a high value on church attendance, spiritual activity, prayers before meals, or any number of things. But James says there is one way to determine whether you are a mature believer—by noticing what comes out of your mouth. He writes, “If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, then his religion is useless and he deceives himself” (James 1:26). According to this passage, many believers today are wasting their time doing a lot of religious activities while letting their loose lips make all manner of mess.

James gives us two illustrations to make his point. He begins by comparing the influence of our mouths to that of a bit and bridle in a horse’s mouth. When Lois and I took our kids to family camp each summer at Pine Cove, we usually got to spend some time riding horses. If you’ve ridden a horse before, you know that you can control an entire 1500-pound beast of an animal with a little piece of metal placed just right in its mouth. If I wanted to make the horse go left, all I had to do was to move the reins so that the bit in his mouth would guide him in the direction I wanted to go. If I wanted to stop, I simply pulled back, and the bit in the horse’s mouth brought him to a complete stop.

I don’t mind riding a horse like that. But I wouldn’t want to get on the back of a wild stallion, and I imagine you wouldn’t either. A

wild stallion that had never been brought under control would buck either of us right off.

---

Your tongue is so powerful, it can literally steer the course of your life.

---

Just as a person riding a horse uses a bit to control the entire body of the horse—even when the horse is much bigger and stronger—that three-inch muscle in your mouth can control your entire life. Your tongue is so powerful, it can literally steer the course of your life. An unbridled tongue—just like an unbridled horse—can cause serious damage to the rest of your life and to those in your path. Far too many people have ruined relationships and careers because of the explosions that have come out of their mouths.

Yet if you will learn to use the bit in your mouth—the dynamite in your dentures—for good, you will have the ability to steer your life, your relationships, and your work. You will also gain the ability to overcome the strongholds in your life you have been struggling to overcome. You will discover how to successfully navigate relationships in your home, at work, and in the church. You will have the power you need to direct your life choices toward the full, vibrant, and victorious life Christ came to give you.

But in order to do all that, you have to bring your tongue under control rather than letting it control you. You have to learn to watch your mouth.

James also compares the tongue to the rudder of a ship. We read, “And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs” (James 3:4).

---

Your tongue may be small, but it will direct your life. That is the way God designed it.

---

The rudder of a ship is a small piece of equipment attached to an enormous, heavy body of steel. Yet that small piece of equipment determines the direction the boat will go. Your tongue may be small, but it will direct your life. That is the way God designed it.

## **Damaging Life**

If you don't learn to watch your mouth, you will set yourself up for the next point James introduces in his discourse on the tongue. You will experience the power in your mouth to do damage to your life and the lives of those around you.

So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell.

Every sea creature, reptile, bird, or animal is tamed and has been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:5-8).

As I write this chapter, fires rage all the way from Alaska to Arizona. More than 50 large wildfires have stripped the land, driving thousands of people from their homes. These flames blaze to the tune of billions of dollars of damage to property, yet they are often caused by a single match. One match is not much to contend with, but if

you leave it alone long enough and don't address the damage it causes, you will face a fire too large to ignore. A fire that will consume in just a matter of minutes what took years to construct and establish. Very few things can withstand the heat of such a blaze.

What's worse is the time it takes to rebuild what was destroyed. Did you realize that it takes an average of eleven years for land to recover after it has been burned by a wildfire? And it takes decades for a forest to be reestablished. All because of a spark that turned into a flame and consumed the life that once was there.

Have you ever experienced anything like that in your own life? Not a literal forest fire, but a fire lit by your mouth—something you said? Maybe it was a wrong word at the wrong time. It could have been an inaccurate statement. It didn't have to be an entire paragraph to cause serious damage. One word can light another word, which lights another word...and before you know it, a marriage that seemed so strong and loving is now in divorce court. All it takes is one match to start a forest fire, and all it takes is a wrong word (or even an inappropriate tone of voice) to wreak havoc on a home.

On October 8, 1871, it only took one cow knocking over one lantern on the outskirts of old Chicago to start a fire that would burn for two days, claim more than 300 lives, destroy more than three miles of property, and leave more than 100,000 people homeless.

On April 28, 2015, it took only one word said the wrong way at one protest in Baltimore to get rocks flying, windows smashed, and flames burning down not only the local CVS Pharmacy but entire housing complexes.

One word. One sentence. One phrase can lead to a chain reaction of damage in property and in people's lives. For example, if the president of the United States says, "We're going to war," that's only one sentence. But that one sentence will cost lives, split families, and bring untold disaster. It's only a phrase, but it carries a lot of dynamite.

Hell is just waiting for a chance to influence our tongues.

---

Why can words do all of that? How can we start with one little disagreement and end up with family members refusing to speak to each other for years? Whether the rift is between coworkers, relatives, neighbors, or races, how can the mouth do so much damage?

James tells us how: “The tongue is a fire...and is set on fire by hell.” The reason why your tongue and mine can do so much damage is that hell is just waiting for a chance to influence our tongues. When you or I speak, hell is looking for an opportunity to fan a spark into a fire. Satan purposefully and intently looks for ways to pour fuel on the fire of your speech so that what you say becomes bigger than you ever imagined.

Friend, your speech is not just your speech. Your speech can be empowered by hell.

James gives another illustration of the damage caused by the tongue when he talks of the beasts and birds, reptiles and sea creatures. He reminds us that all of these have been tamed by the human race, and yet no one can tame the tongue. Trainers have learned how to tame lions, entice tigers to jump through hoops, teach bears to ride bikes, or convince elephants to place a foot on someone’s head without crushing them. All of this has been done with well-trained animals.

But how many times did your mother try to tame your tongue? How many times has your spouse reminded you that your tongue is not tamed—or vice versa? You may scold your children for not watching their mouth, but as soon as they enter their room and are out of earshot, they are likely to mumble something under their breath. This is because no man can tame the tongue.



Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans that no one is without this sin: “There is no one righteous, not even one... Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers’ venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Romans 3:10,13-14).

---

Whoever controls your tongue controls your life.

---

Paul’s point is clear—the tongue is unruly and refuses to be tamed. And remember, whoever controls the bit controls the beast. Whoever controls your tongue controls your life—your addictions, relationships, goals, and more.

Satan wants nothing more than to lull you into thinking that what comes out of your mouth does little damage at all. But in fact, your mouth (or someone else’s) is the source of all damage and the catalyst for all the destruction you face.

## **Determining Life**

After James discusses the power of your mouth to direct your life and to damage it, he dives into the power of the mouth to determine life.

We praise our Lord and Father with it, and we curse men who are made in God’s likeness with it. Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine

produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water (James 3:9-12).

James reminds us that our mouths and our tongues can do something that even nature itself cannot do. We have the power to act in a way that is outside the natural order of things. For example, you cannot go to a water fountain and out of that one opening get both fresh and bitter water. You will either get fresh water or you will get bitter water, but you won't get both out of the same place. Nor can you go to a fig tree and get both apples and figs. You can only get figs from a fig tree. In nature, things produce only what they were designed to produce. That's the way nature works.

But not the tongue. The tongue has the unique ability to contradict itself. James tells us that we do this when out of the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. One person can speak words that create life and words that cause death. James tells us that this should not be. Just as we don't want to be double-minded, we shouldn't be double-tongued. We weren't designed to function that way. Rather, we were created in the image and likeness of God. We bear the being of God within us, and He is not like that.

When God created the world, He didn't roll up His sleeves and get to work. Rather, God created the world and all that is in it with His words. He spoke. God demonstrated the power of spoken words when He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. The land was separated from the water not because God started digging but because God started talking. He used His mouth, not His hands.

---

When God described Jesus Christ, He  
talked about speech—the Word.

---

Even more enlightening, when God introduced Jesus to us in John 1:1, He said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” God went on to say in verse 14 that “the Word became flesh.” When God described Jesus Christ, He talked about speech—the Word.

God’s creative genius is in His speech. Even His own essence is in speech. When God chose to create something out of nothing, all He had to do was speak. When He wanted to teach Adam how to live his life, He gave Adam His word. Why? Because Adam was created in the image of God, so Adam was also given speech. The animals were not given speech—only humanity has this power. It is the power to give life and to take it. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Life and death are in the power of the tongue.”

---

Our speech holds power beyond our wildest imaginations.

---

Just as God spoke the world and all life into being, you and I have the power to speak life or to speak death into our own lives and into each other. As beings created in the image of the one true God, we have been given a most powerful tool. Imagine how powerful speech must be if everything you see in the physical, tangible world was brought about through it. Now imagine what God wants to do in and through your mouth. He will use your words to bring you into your own personal destiny, and He will use your words to lead the people you influence into their destinies. Our speech holds power beyond our wildest imaginations.

Conversely, Satan brought death when he convinced Adam and Eve to believe his word.

A member of the church I pastor was decorated with several medals, including the Medal of Honor, after serving as a Marine in Vietnam. In one battle, eight of his men were wounded on the battlefield, and he alone went out to bring each person back to camp. Eight times he risked his own life in order to “leave no man behind.”

Where did he find this courage?

The words of his father.

Shortly before he had left for war as a young man, his father took him aside to pray with him. Following that prayer, his father looked him in the eyes and said, “Son, I know you are coming back. I will see you again.” His father had never lied to him before, so when he heard those words, he knew right then and there that he was going to make it back home alive. This belief gave him the courage to take risks on the battlefield that many men would not—all because of his father’s words.

He not only made it back alive but also became a highly decorated veteran, honored and esteemed for his bravery on behalf of his comrades.

---

As individuals made in His image, our highest calling is to model with our mouths the image and character of God.

---

Words can save lives. Or from the same source, they can light a fire of destruction. The Lord tells us through James that this should not be. As individuals made in His image, our highest calling is to

model with our mouths the image and character of God. We are His messengers.

Keep in mind that Satan knows this too. So he will try everything possible to trip you up in this one area of your life. Whoever controls the tongue, controls the future.