

GROWTH AND STUDY GUIDE



watch your mouth

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How to Use This Study Guide

Welcome to the *Watch Your Mouth Growth and Study Guide*. It is intended to be used with the book *Watch Your Mouth* to help you go deeper into those truths and apply them to your life. If you are using this study in a small group or at home with your family members, be sure that everyone has access to a copy of the book *Watch Your Mouth* ahead of your start date. Read each chapter in the book before responding to the questions in the corresponding chapter of the study guide.

You will notice that each chapter of this study is divided into four sections:

- Subject Summary
- Reflection
- Application
- Scripture Memorization and Interaction

Each of these sections has been designed with a unique purpose. The *Subject Summary* provides a brief review of the chapter. If you are using this study guide in a group setting, consider reading this section out loud.

The *Reflection* questions lead you on a journey through several Scriptures and important thoughts. Keep your Bible handy beside you or on your phone or tablet so you can look up the recommended additional reading. Spend as much time as you need reflecting on the principles introduced in each question and each Scripture you read. Then record your thoughts either in the book or in a journal.

The *Application* section takes the truths to a more personal and practical level in your life so you can apply them to the decisions you make on a regular basis. These questions will sometimes include additional Scriptures for you to read but will often be focused on how the principles you are learning can best play out in your life. They may call for direct action that you implement later in the week or even that day. Keep a note of your personal challenges and applications so you can track your implementation and progress in these areas of spiritual growth.

Finally, the *Scripture Memorization and Interaction* section provides you with additional learning opportunities, so keep your Bible handy and be sure to look up and read each verse. If you are in a group situation, everyone's ideas do not have to agree. Allow each person the freedom to express themselves without interruption. In addition, any action steps suggested can be discussed and applied according to your own timetable.

May you enjoy this study and truly experience all God has in store for you as you discover the ways in which your words really do matter—to yourself, to others, and to the Lord.



Part 1

the power of the tongue

Dynamite in Your Dentures

Subject Summary

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.

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 mouth has the power to destroy anything in its path. The muscle in the mouth is no small thing. In fact, some couples have

gotten divorced because of the sticks of dynamite that continue to blow up their relationship. 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).

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites, “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” (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, including 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, a relationship, or another important part of your life.

The same tool in your mouth can bring both life and death. In a doctor’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. It's our choice.

Answer the following questions for personal reflection and deeper study. Feel free to discuss your answers in a group context.

Reflection

1. What is the purpose of salt?
2. What happens when too much salt is used? Explain how that comes across in our speech, and give an example.
3. Read Proverbs 25:11 and explain in your own words how this passage describes right words that are spoken at the right time from a pure heart.

4. Based on Colossians 4:6, why does God ask us to have our speech seasoned with salt?

5. Based on Proverbs 15:1, what are the results of a gentle answer and a harsh tongue? How do these results differ?

As we reflect on these verses, we are using a process called *inductive Bible study*—observing a passage, interpreting it, and applying it to our own lives. Too often we try to interpret a portion of Scripture before observing it carefully—in particular, taking note of its context. Lifting a verse out of its context is a dangerous practice, opening the door for people to make the Bible say almost anything they want it to say.

For example, consider a verse that Christians love to quote and memorize: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Without reading the context of the verse, we lose the meaning of the original writer with regard to our encouragement. Read carefully these verses surrounding verse 11:

You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are

saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another (verses 2-13 NASB).

- a. What do you notice about the context in which Paul instructs us to encourage each other?

b. Does this encouragement have a specific focus?

c. What is the intended outcome?

d. Whom are we to encourage, specifically and also broadly?

e. What is to be the motivation of our encouragement?

Application

The truths we have learned in this first chapter of *Watch Your Mouth* remind us that we are to hold our words in high regard. They

carry the ability to destroy things quickly, so we need to temper our responses.

Here's an exercise that will help you keep track of how well you measure your words. This next week, designate a period of time to wait before responding to anything of a personal nature. You might tell the person you're talking with, "Let me think on that; I'll get back to you in a few days." Observe the way your initial response—the one you didn't share—changes after giving yourself time to think.

Scripture Memorization and Interaction

Read and memorize the following Scriptures on the tongue and our words. In the space provided, rewrite each passage in your own words as a prayer to God. Or you may choose to simply rewrite the verse in your own words as a way of helping you to remember its content. The first one has been done as an example.

1. "I cried out to Him with my mouth, and praise was on my tongue" (Psalm 66:17).

Lord, I cry out to You with my mouth—please fill my heart and my mind with praise so that praise of who You are and what You do will always be on my tongue. In Christ's name, amen.

2. "Whoever speaks the truth declares what is right, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue, only a moment" (Proverbs 12:17-19).

3. “Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21).

4. “LORD, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

5. “Do not let your mouth bring guilt on you, and do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands?” (Ecclesiastes 5:6).