

Who's got your tongue?

blessing

praise

slang

thanksgiving

cursing

swearing



Look before you leap. Think before you speak.

Good advice? Sure! Who of us hasn't been embarrassed when he said something without thinking? We didn't mean to say it. It just somehow slipped out too fast.

Our computer age is an era of fast moving, fast living, and fast talking. If you don't believe it, just stand in the marketplace or on the street corner sometime.

You can hear just about any kind of talk—a heated argument, cursing, swearing, the latest obscene joke, or you name it.

Such speech has no place on the lips of the follower of Jesus Christ, you say. You're right! But what about the speech of those of us who wouldn't be heard relating obscenities, swearing, cursing, or directing bitter slander at the next-door neighbor?

Is our speech **always** clear of all impurities, or do we let the rush of our age control our tongues? Have you taken stock lately of the "products" which come from your own tongue?

Sometimes the rush to "get your piece said" may cause you to slip up and say some things you shouldn't. One of the greatest dangers the Christian faces in using his tongue is the use of exclamations when excited.

You've probably overheard someone oohing and aahing over that shiny new car or that gorgeous new house and saying, "*Golly*, what a beauty." Or maybe you've overheard, "*O Darn*, I did it again" after

someone hit his finger with a hammer.

Perhaps in the conversation over the back fence, you've heard, "*My goodness*, wasn't that an awful thunderstorm."

What's wrong with these words? Plenty! They are "polite" words for things that aren't so polite to say. Maybe you wouldn't think of using God's or Jesus' name just any old time. Yet *Golly*, *Gol*, and *Gad* are used for "God," *Gee* and *Geez* for "Jesus."

You would never want to curse someone, asking God to send him to the lake of fire. Yet, you might use *darn*, *durn*, or *durnnit*. They mean "damn."

What about such seemingly innocent expressions as *my goodness* and *goodness gracious*? These are still irreverent uses of God's name. *My goodness* takes the place of "My God," and *goodness gracious* is a substitute for "God's grace."

God has warned man in His Word, the Bible, about the loose use of His Name—just kicking it around in everyday conversation or using it to condemn someone.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

God commands us not to use His name unless we use it with respect and honor toward Him. Such expressions as: *I'll swear*, *By God*, and *By Jove* (a Roman god) are out of the question for the Christian in light of this commandment.

Much like this Old Testament commandment is the New Testament command: “Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34-37).

These verses rule out using God’s name to try to make people believe that you’re telling the truth. If you’re a Christian it is a foregone conclusion that you will tell the truth.

You don’t need to call on God, anyone, or anything else to prove you’re telling the truth.

For heaven’s sake, my heavens, my stars—swearing by heaven? *My lands*—swearing by the earth?! Pleasing to God? Hardly.

By now, you may be asking, “What can I say if I’m surprised or excited? Many of the usual expressions are not fitting for a Christian.”

Your first concern in all that you say must be to bring glory to God. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17).

Much of the time which people waste exclaiming over or complaining about the weather, the latest tragedy, or the beauty of some object, could be used more wisely praising God for all things.

Instead of exclaiming over and blaming God for the destructive storm, praise God for sparing your life, realizing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

It would be a good idea to “take stock” of the situations that cause you to use exclamations. Find out why you’re exclaiming. Is it to impress someone? To fake interest when you couldn’t care less? Be sure your exclamations are genuine—that they express the joy or concern that you really mean.

The things you say reveal your life-desires and true motives.

“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:34, 35).

Someday all men will have to answer to God for the things they have spoken from the “abundance of the heart.” In that day, excuses will not stand. “Well, I didn’t really realize what I was saying,” or “I just said it without thinking” will do no good.

“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37).

The things your mouth speaks are really determined by **who** controls your tongue. The good man’s tongue is a God-controlled tongue—the evil man’s tongue is a Satan-controlled tongue.

God desires to control every tongue. Without Him a man's tongue is out of control like a wind-whipped forest fire. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity . . . and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:6).

"The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). Only Jesus Christ can tame that unruly tongue. How? Only as you yield your life to Him in obedience to His Word.

IN CHRIST your speech habits **will** be changed. How?

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead [to sin], and your life is hid with Christ in God. Mortify [make dead] therefore your members which are upon the earth . . . put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy [swearing and cursing], filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:2, 3, 5, 8).

Christ will take a crucified tongue, one that is surrendered to Him for His use, and will make it "alive" with good conversation that will bring praise to God.

Who's got **your** tongue?

—Roger L. Berry