

Proverbs on the Use of the Tongue

How to use this list: Since all of us have trouble controlling our tongue, we should consider carefully the counsel Solomon, acclaimed as the wisest man in the world, gives us about our speech. The following is a list of proverbs centering on the conceptual group: [tongue](#), [mouth](#), [lips](#), [speech](#), [speak](#), [words](#), and [say](#).

I have eliminated verses that seem to fall outside of the main idea. Here are a few suggested uses of this list: 1) Read through them to gain a general overview of how the tongue can help or hurt; 2) Watch for similes and metaphors, and pause long enough to achieve an understanding of the literal point of the figurative language; 3) Analyze also the pairs of synonyms and/or antonyms that occur in the parallel lines; these have a mutually defining character to them; 4) Identify those proverbs that seem most relevant to the struggles you have controlling your tongue; 5) Meditate on those proverbs you have selected; 6) Memorize them, including where to find them; 7) Incorporate them into your “self talk,” your inner voice that helps to train your conscience



and guide your choices; 8) Share what you are learning with others in a non-judgmental way, like, "Here's something significant I have gained for my own life from the Book of Proverbs." To this list I have appended a number of practical suggestions on [how to tame the tongue](#).

TONGUE

Proverbs 6:17 haughty eyes, a lying **tongue**, hands that shed innocent blood,

Proverbs 6:24 keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth **tongue** of the wayward wife.

Proverbs 10:19 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his **tongue** is wise.

Proverbs 10:20 The **tongue** of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.

Proverbs 10:31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse **tongue** will be cut out.

Proverbs 11:12 A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his **tongue**.

Proverbs 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the **tongue** of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 12:19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying **tongue** lasts only a moment.

Proverbs 15:2 The **tongue** of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

Proverbs 15:4 The **tongue** that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful **tongue** crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 16:1 To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the reply of the **tongue**.

Proverbs 17:4 A wicked man listens to evil lips; a liar pays attention to a malicious **tongue**.

Proverbs 17:20 A man of perverse heart does not prosper; he whose **tongue** is deceitful falls into trouble.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his **tongue**.

Proverbs 18:21 The **tongue** has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Proverbs 21:6 A fortune made by a lying **tongue** is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare.

Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his **tongue** keeps himself from calamity.

Proverbs 25:15 Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle **tongue** can break a bone.

Proverbs 25:23 As a north wind brings rain, so a sly **tongue** brings angry looks.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying **tongue** hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Proverbs 28:23 He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering **tongue**.

Proverbs 31:26 She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her **tongue**.

MOUTH

Proverbs 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his **mouth** come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 4:24 Put away perversity from your **mouth**; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

Proverbs 6:2 if you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your **mouth**,

Proverbs 6:12 A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt **mouth**,

Proverbs 8:7 My **mouth** speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness.

Proverbs 8:8 All the words of my **mouth** are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.

Proverbs 10:6 Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the **mouth** of the wicked.

Proverbs 10:11 The **mouth** of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the **mouth** of the wicked.

Proverbs 10:14 Wise men store up knowledge, but the **mouth** of a fool invites ruin.

Proverbs 10:31 The **mouth** of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.

Proverbs 10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the **mouth** of the wicked only what is perverse.

Proverbs 11:9 With his **mouth** the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.

Proverbs 11:11 Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the **mouth** of the wicked it is destroyed.

Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the **mouth** of the fool gushes folly.

Proverbs 15:14 The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the **mouth** of a fool feeds on folly.

Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the **mouth** of the wicked gushes evil.

Proverbs 16:10 The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his **mouth** should not betray justice.

Proverbs 16:23 A wise man's heart guides his **mouth**, and his lips promote instruction.

Proverbs 18:4 The words of a man's **mouth** are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips bring him strife, and his **mouth** invites a beating.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool's **mouth** is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

Proverbs 18:20 From the fruit of his **mouth** a man's stomach is

Proverbs 19:24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his **mouth**!

Proverbs 19:28 A corrupt witness mocks at justice, and the **mouth** of the wicked gulps down evil.

Proverbs 20:17 Food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man, but he ends up with a **mouth** full of gravel.

Proverbs 21:23 He who guards his **mouth** and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.

Proverbs 22:14 The **mouth** of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is under the LORD's wrath will fall into it.

Proverbs 26:7 Like a lame man's legs that hang limp is a proverb in the **mouth** of a fool.

Proverbs 26:9 Like a thornbush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the **mouth** of a fool.

Proverbs 26:15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his **mouth**.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering **mouth** works ruin.

Proverbs 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own **mouth**; someone else, and not your own lips.

Proverbs 30:20 This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her **mouth** and says, "I've done nothing wrong."

Proverbs 30:32 If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your **mouth**!

LIPS

Proverbs 4:24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your **lips**.

Proverbs 5:2 that you may maintain discretion and your **lips** may preserve knowledge.

Proverbs 5:3 For the **lips** of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil;

Proverbs 8:6 Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my **lips** to speak what is right.

Proverbs 8:7 My mouth speaks what is true, for my **lips** detest wickedness.

Proverbs 10:13 Wisdom is found on the **lips** of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks judgment.

Proverbs 10:18 He who conceals his hatred has lying **lips**, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

Proverbs 10:21 The **lips** of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.

Proverbs 10:32 The **lips** of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.

Proverbs 12:14 From the fruit of his **lips** a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.

Proverbs 12:19 Truthful **lips** endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

Proverbs 12:22 The LORD detests lying **lips**, but he delights in men who are truthful.

Proverbs 13:2 From the fruit of his **lips** a man enjoys good things, but the unfaithful have a craving for violence.

Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his **lips** guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

Proverbs 14:3 A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the **lips** of the wise protect them.

Proverbs 14:7 Stay away from a foolish man, for you will not find knowledge on his **lips**.

Proverbs 15:7 The **lips** of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.

Proverbs 16:10 The **lips** of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth should not betray justice.

Proverbs 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest **lips**; they value a man who speaks the truth.

Proverbs 16:23 A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his **lips** promote instruction.

Proverbs 16:30 He who winks with his eye is plotting perversity; he who purses his **lips** is bent on evil.

Proverbs 17:4 A wicked man listens to evil **lips**; a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue.

Proverbs 17:7 Arrogant **lips** are unsuited to a fool— how much worse lying **lips** to a ruler!

Proverbs 18:6 A fool's **lips** bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating.

Proverbs 18:7 A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his **lips** are a snare to his soul.

Proverbs 18:20 From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his **lips** he is satisfied.

Proverbs 19:1 Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose **lips** are perverse.

Proverbs 20:15 Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but **lips** that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.

Proverbs 22:18 for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your **lips**.

Proverbs 23:16 my inmost being will rejoice when your **lips** speak what is right.

Proverbs 24:2 for their hearts plot violence, and their **lips** talk about making trouble.

Proverbs 24:26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the **lips**.

Proverbs 24:28 Do not testify against your neighbor without cause, or use your **lips** to deceive.

Proverbs 26:23 Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent **lips** with an evil heart.

Proverbs 26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his **lips**, but in his heart he harbors deceit.

Proverbs 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own **lips**.

SPEECH

Proverbs 5:3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her **speech** is smoother than oil;

Proverbs 8:13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse **speech**.

Proverbs 12:6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the **speech** of the upright rescues them.

Proverbs 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil, and his **speech** is like a scorching fire.

Proverbs 22:11 He who loves a pure heart and whose **speech** is gracious will have the king for his friend.

Proverbs 26:25 Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.

SPEAK

Proverbs 8:6 Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to **speak** what is right.

Proverbs 8:7 My mouth **speaks** what is true, for my lips detest wickedness.

Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who **speaks** rashly will come to ruin.

Proverbs 16:10 The lips of a king **speak** as an oracle, and his mouth should not betray justice.

Proverbs 16:13 Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who **speaks** the truth.

Proverbs 20:15 Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that **speak** knowledge are a rare jewel.

Proverbs 23:9 Do not **speak** to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your words.

Proverbs 23:16 my inmost being will rejoice when your lips **speak** what is right.

Proverbs 29:20 Do you see a man who **speak**s in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 31:8 **Speak** up for those who cannot **speak** for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Proverbs 31:9 **Speak** up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:26 She **speak**s with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

WORDS

Proverbs 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding **words** of insight;

Proverbs 2:1 My son, if you accept my **words** and store up my commands within you,

Proverbs 2:12 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose **words** are perverse,

Proverbs 2:16 It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive **words**,

Proverbs 4:4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my **words** with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.

Proverbs 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my **words** or swerve from them.

Proverbs 4:20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my **words**.

Proverbs 5:1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my **words** of insight,

Proverbs 6:2 if you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the **words** of your mouth,

Proverbs 7:1 My son, keep my **words** and store up my commands within you.

Proverbs 7:5 they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive **words**.

Proverbs 7:21 With persuasive **words** she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk.

Proverbs 8:8 All the **words** of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.

Proverbs 10:19 When **words** are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Proverbs 12:6 The **words** of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them.

Proverbs 12:18 Reckless **words** pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 16:21 The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant **words** promote instruction.

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant **words** are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Proverbs 17:27 A man of knowledge uses **words** with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.

Proverbs 18:4 The **words** of a man's mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

Proverbs 18:8 The **words** of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

Proverbs 19:27 Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the **words** of knowledge.

Proverbs 22:12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch over knowledge, but he frustrates the **words** of the unfaithful.

Proverbs 22:21 teaching you true and reliable **words**, so that you can give sound answers to him who sent you?

Proverbs 23:9 Do not speak to a fool, for he will scorn the wisdom of your **words**.

Proverbs 23:12 Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to **words** of knowledge.

Proverbs 26:22 The **words** of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

Proverbs 29:19 A servant cannot be corrected by mere **words**; though he understands, he will not respond.

Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to his **words**, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

SAY

Proverbs 1:6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the **sayings** and riddles of the wise.

Proverbs 1:11 If they **say**, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul."

Proverbs 3:28 Do not **say** to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"—when you now have it with you.

Proverbs 4:10 Listen, my son, accept what I **say**, and the years of your life will be many.

Proverbs 4:20 My son, pay attention to what I **say**; listen closely to my words.

Proverbs 5:7 Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I **say**.

Proverbs 5:12 You will **say**, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction!"

Proverbs 7:4 **Say** to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your kinsman;

Proverbs 7:24 Now then, my sons, listen to me; pay attention to what I **say**.

Proverbs 8:6 Listen, for I have worthy things to **say**; I open my lips to speak what is right.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can **say**, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?

Proverbs 20:14 "It's no good, it's no good!" **says** the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase.

Proverbs 20:22 Do not **say**, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.

Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard **says**, "There is a lion outside!" or, "I will be murdered in the streets!"

Proverbs 22:17 Pay attention and listen to the **sayings** of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach,

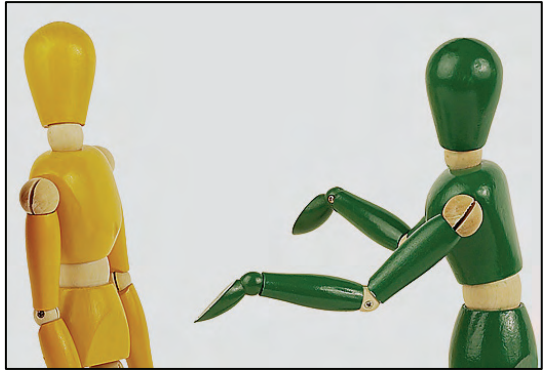
Proverbs 22:20 Have I not written thirty **sayings** for you, **sayings** of counsel and knowledge,

Proverbs 30:20 This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and **says**, "I've done nothing wrong."

How to Tame the Tongue

Before a conversation...

1. Think about past incidents in which you have deeply regretted something you said.
2. Slow down your response time so you can think about the potential effects of what you are about to say before you say it.
3. Recognize what your "triggers" are so that you can be prepared for them:
 - a. Hot-button topics
 - b. Irritating mannerisms



- c. Your own mood
 - d. How tired you are
 - e. Music or noise in the background
 - f. Prior negative events
 - g. History with this person
 - h. Bad habits, e.g., interrupting, raising the volume, the speed, and the pitch
 - i. Body language: scowl, crossed arms, leaning back instead of forward, tight lips, looking at the ceiling
 - j. Your or the other person's breathing
4. Read the Proverbs about the use of the tongue. Memorize the one you think significant and relevant.
 5. Pray about overcoming your problem and ask others to pray for you.

During a conversation...

1. Develop your listening skills.
2. Listen to what you are telling yourself and question whether it is valid before you say it out loud to someone else.
3. Engage in responsive dialogue rather than just two monologues, such as:
 - a. Reflecting back to the other person how you think they are feeling.
 - b. Paraphrase what they have just said to ensure you have it right.
 - c. Avoid giving advice.
 - d. Ask questions for clarification and to probe.
 - e. Listen for repeated themes and pick up on that.
4. Use touch to bring down the temperature.

Watch your attitude...

1. Avoid accusations and impugning of motives.
2. Take the other person at their word.
3. Avoid “dropping the bomb on Luxembourg”—saying something that you know will hurt deeply.
4. Exclude certain kinds of humor from your repertoire:
 - a. Sarcasm
 - b. Name-calling, even in jest
 - c. Any other kind of put-down
 - d. Painting a gloomy future
 - e. Retelling an embarrassing incident, faux pas, or blunder that happened to someone present.
5. Find good ways to use your tongue, such as:
 - a. Expressing gratitude and appreciation

- b. Singing praise songs
- c. Complimenting someone
- d. Asking another person's advice
- e. Sharing an insight from Scripture
- f. Dialoguing with a person about an issue they are having
- g. Creating your own positive "mental tapes" that you can play over and over, as a replacement of the negative ones your parents may have given you, or your teachers, your bosses, your siblings, your friends or enemies—or those you may have created on your own, like "I never can do anything right" or "How could I be so stupid?"
 - 1) Quoting to yourself Scripture verses that encourage or instruct you, e.g., "Cast all of your cares upon the Lord, for He cares for you," or "I can do everything through Him who strengthens me."

- 2) Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to yourself throughout the day.
- 3) Memorize other sayings to repeat to yourself that will encourage you, e.g., "Whenever the devil reminds me of my past, I remind him of his future."
- 4) Identify and keep remembering past triumphs as mental "Ebenezers" (memorial of a victory), telling yourself, "I did that, which was so much harder; I can do this, too."

Want to go deeper?

Recommended for purchase:

- R. T. Kendall. [Controlling the Tongue: Mastering the What, When & Why of the Words You Speak](#) (2007) -- Kendall's treatment for the tongue has four parts: Failure in Controlling the Tongue, Success in Controlling the Tongue, The Trouble with the Tongue, and Motivation to Change. Kendall illustrates his pages with biblical characters who spoke without thinking or who used their speech powerfully and effectively.
- Derek Prince. [Does Your Tongue Need Healing?](#) (1994) -- Provides an analysis of what the Bible says about the tongue, including how the tongue indicates the condition of the heart. Also discusses first steps to healing and positively, what God intends for us to do with our tongues.
- Joseph M. Stowell. [The Weight of Your Words](#) (1998) -- A close examination of the various sins of the tongue (beguilement, deceit, lying, false witness, gossip, slander, boasting, flattery, exaggeration, murmuring, contentiousness, profanity, sensuous speech), as well as how to defuse anger, the fire of the tongue. Stowell concludes with three chapters about replacing bad words with good ones, and the effect this change brings.
- F. Franlyn Wise. [The Problem of Gossip: Guidelines for Christian Speech](#) (1998) -- Booklet defining and describing gossip and its ill effects. Then explores the basic biblical guidelines prohibiting gossip and offers help for the afflicted.

Recommended for online study:

Biblical studies:

G. M. Stulac. "[Controlling What We Say](#)" from his commentary in the Inter-Varsity New Testament commentary series, *James* (1993).

Alfred Plummer. "[The Powers and Propensities of the Tongue](#)," from *Exposition of the Bible: Epistle of James* (1903).

E. H. Chapin. "[The Government of the Tongue](#)," discourse 5 in his *Discourses on Various Subjects* (3rd ed., 1846).

Secular studies:

- One useful secular source is "[Cuss Control Academy](#)," which conducts classes and makes presentations to help people control their habit of using profanity and obscene language. Numerous articles are available at this website, including "[10 tips for Taming Your Tongue](#)" and more than a dozen on [workplace profanity](#).
- Another secular source from the U.K. provides information about being a [compulsive liar](#). Also see this long list of confessions of compulsive liars explaining [why they lie](#).

- Dr. Nancy J. Wasson suggests that a spouse's use of sarcasm and barbed humor may be one of many forms of [passive-aggressive behavior](#). She provides a number of recommendations regarding how to treat the underlying problem.
- Part of learning to control the tongue includes knowing [how to listen](#).