

# Journey CHURCH

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## Watch Your Mouth Session 1- Who is Master of Your Mouth

As I began to compile my notes to teach and write on this topic of our words, I was interested to see how very little had been previously taught or written on the subject. That amazed me because there is precious little in our lives that carries such an enormous impact on our lives. Just like physical life and death are contained in the power of the heart, life and death—whether emotional, relational, spiritual or even physical—are contained in the power of the tongue. We certainly would never downplay the role our heart has in our lives, and yet this subject of speech doesn't seem to get the airtime it deserves in Christian realms. Especially when it makes such a crucial contribution to our success or failure, individually and collectively.

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### Video Teaching Notes

As you watch the video, use the space below to take notes. Some key points and quotes are provided here as reminders.

### Jarid's Story

Jarid grew up without a father, and he developed a bad habit of lying to people to get what he wanted. He served in the air force and enjoyed riding motorcycles and shooting guns in his spare time. He lived a wild lifestyle, partying, drinking, and sleeping with women. He had a short temper, and his words often got him in trouble. He frequently shouted at people when he got mad. He struggled to hold down a job because of his angry outbursts at his bosses.

Jarid started going to church, but he was embarrassed about being unemployed. He lied about being a New York City firefighter, and when he was called out on it, many people stopped trusting him. He realized that he had a bad habit of lying and that he needed to work on that because he was now following the Lord. Listen to Jarid's testimony and pay close attention to his heart as he explains how his words brought pain to himself and those around him, and how he had to rebuild what his own mouth had torn down.

### Teaching 1: Tony Evans

1. Dynamite is a powerful tool for good and for bad. What are some ways dynamite has been used for good in our nation's history? What are some ways it is used for bad?

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2. How does dynamite compare to the use of the mouth? In what ways can the same mouth be used for good and for bad?
3. How is the tragedy of death in the Garden of Eden tied to words?

The mouth can be used to...  
build up or tear down  
encourage or deceive  
create or destroy

## Quotables

- You and I were created by God with access to an internal, explosive power that can construct or destroy.
- This tool is the dynamite in our dentures—the tool known as the tongue.
- Your greatest enemy is in your own mouth. So is your greatest friend.
- Whoever controls your tongue controls your life.

## Stacy's Story

Stacy's daughter Ellie was born missing 65 percent of her brain's left hemisphere. Ellie's doctors told Stacy and her husband that Ellie would never walk, talk, or perform any meaningful behavior. Stacy asked God to help her accept this devastating news for her daughter, but she felt God prompting her to not give up—to pray in faith, trusting God to heal Ellie. Stacy and her husband and their church prayed in faith not only for Ellie's healing but also that God would be glorified through Ellie's life. Today, Ellie is a fully functioning 12-year-old girl. She walks, talks, reads on the same level as her peers, and likes to swim and dance.

## Teaching 2: Tony Evans

Jesus cursed a fig tree because it was not producing fruit. Within 24 hours, the entire fig tree had withered.

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The disciples wanted to know how Jesus could affect a tree with just His words.

Jesus assured them they could do that and more by speaking to (not about) the mountain they were facing. He told them that after they spoke to the mountain, they were to speak to God about it.

Use words to face challenges in life by...

1. finding out what God says on the matter in His Word
2. speaking God's truth directly to the situation you are facing
3. holding God hostage to His Word and His character when you speak to Him about it
4. reminding yourself of God's truth

## **Video Group Discussion**

1. What did you learn from the examples of Jarid and Stacy? What negative results happened from the use of their mouths? What positive results happened? How important is it to be honest in your relationships with each other and also with God?
  
2. We encounter various situations in life where we are tempted to use our mouths for negative things such as complaining or gossiping. Did Jesus complain about the fig tree, or did He address it? What is the difference between those two approaches with our speech?
  
3. God's call to Moses to use his mouth and words to lead the people of Israel to freedom was a divine direction to his destiny. In what way has the Lord spoken to you about your destiny? Are you dependent on Him for accomplishing any of it? In what areas are you most dependent on Him?

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4. How would you describe the difference between the “life in the tongue” and “death in the tongue”? Describe how someone might exemplify one kind or the other.

5. On the continuum below, where would you put your own mouth? Put an X at that spot.

Death----- Life

Where do you think you were, say, ten years ago? Put an O at that spot, and then draw an arrow from the O to the X. What’s your trend? Are you growing and maturing in your mouth, staying the same, or going backward?

6. Moses was obedient to God and used his mouth to lead his people into a better future. As you think about the possibilities in your own life, is there a particular way you can use your words to help others? It could be through blogging, teaching a Sunday school class, singing in the church choir, visiting nursing homes, writing inspirational social media posts, writing a book...any number of ways. Share how God might be leading you to use your mouth and your words for Him.

## Group Bible Exploration

A grocery clerk was asked by a lady if she could buy half a head of lettuce. He replied, “Half a head? That would be very difficult—lettuce grows as whole heads, so that’s how we sell them.” “You mean,” she persisted, “that after all the years I’ve shopped here, you won’t sell me half a head of lettuce?” The man paused to consider her request and then offered to ask the manager on her behalf. Smiling with appreciation, the woman watched the young man go to the front of the store and ask for the manager. The young man had to wait a minute before the manager was available to talk, but then he said, “You won’t believe this, but there’s a lame-brained lady back there who wants to know if she can buy half a head of lettuce. What do you say?” As he spoke, the clerk noticed the manager gesturing for him to stop. Realizing he was nudging him to be aware of what was behind him, he turned around and saw the lady standing right there. Instead of waiting, she had decided to go find out the answer for herself.

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The young clerk simply turned back to the manager and said, “And this nice lady was wondering if she could buy the other half.” Later in the day, the manager approached his young clerk and asked him where he had learned to think on his feet so quickly. Grateful the clerk had saved a customer through his way with words, the manager wanted to know where he had acquired such a skill. “I grew up in Grand Rapids,” the man stated. “And if you know anything about Grand Rapids, you know it’s known for its great hockey teams and its ugly women.” The manager’s face flushed. “My wife is from Grand Rapids.” The clerk promptly replied, “Which hockey team did she play for?” Words can get us into trouble, and they can also get us out of trouble. But one of the greatest pieces of wisdom in the Bible lets us know that when we refrain from speaking altogether, we are choosing the better way—most of the time.

## **Read Together Proverbs 17:28 (nasb)**

Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

1. This verse tells us that even someone who is considered to be a fool can appear to be wise if he or she simply remains silent. What else can we surmise from this verse about the value of silence and verbal restraint?
2. If a fool can appear wise when he or she is silent, what does that say about someone who is discerning and seeking to live a godly life?
3. Give some practical examples of when it would be prudent not to speak what is on your mind.
4. How does this apply to social media? (Keep in mind, words you post on social media are like words you speak. Written words come from the same place as spoken words—your heart.)

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5. Sometimes people appear to be sincere and Christlike—until they say or post something that reveals their true motivations. Please do not share any names, but have you seen this happen? If so, how did the experience make you feel? What did you learn about your own life and speech?

## Read Together Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. So choose life so that you and your descendants may live.

1. When Moses says “life and death,” is he referring to people physically living or dying? Or is he referring to bringing a blessing or destruction through their choices and their words? Explain your answer and discuss how we can bring about blessings or curses through our mouths.

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.

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2. 2. Give an example of how the mouth can be used for good but also for bad. If you are willing, share an example from your own life and how it affected those around you.

Take a moment to read the following verses out loud.

Proverbs 6:2

Proverbs 15:4

Proverbs 12:18

Proverbs 13:3

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3. Summarize all four verses by creating a brand-new proverb (or word of wisdom) that contrasts the two uses of speech. Take a moment to craft your proverb and then write it down. Go around the room and give each person an opportunity to share his or her proverb.
4. Based on Proverbs 6:2 (above), what is an example of how our words can “trap” us? What would be a wise way to avoid this in the future?
5. When God wanted to create something, He used words. When Satan wanted to destroy something, he used words. Both God and Satan used words to exercise their power. Since the tool of your tongue is so incredibly powerful, you can imagine why there is a fight in your mouth between God and the devil. There is a war for your words because life and death come through your words. In what ways can Satan fight to influence your mouth? Keep in mind that the words reflect the heart. In what ways can you seek to guard your heart from negative influences?

## **Read Together Psalm 141:3**

Lord, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.

1. What does a guard do?
2. In what way can God set a guard over our mouths?

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3. How easy is it to ignore this guard? What emotions or thoughts would motivate you to ignore this guard?
4. Sometimes people use the word “vent” when they feel the need to complain for a long time. If the Lord set a guard for your mouth, would that guard encourage you to vent?
5. Can you think of a biblical example of Jesus “venting” (complaining only for the sake of getting His emotions or frustrations out)? Or did Jesus appear to speak harsh words only for a specific purpose?

## Read Together James 1:26

If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, then his religion is useless and he deceives himself.

1. What are some things we might do as believers that James would consider “religious”?
2. Do you think it is extreme to say that these things are “useless” when we do not tame our tongue?
3. Why are the mouth and the words we say so critical in supporting a Christlike spirituality in our lives? What does our tongue reveal about our heart and our spirit?
4. On the scale below, mark where you believe you are with regard to taming your tongue (10 being the most tamed and 1 being not tamed at all).

1----- 10

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5. What steps can you take today and this week to move yourself higher on that scale, closer to a 10?
6. What is keeping you from taking those steps? (It could be fear—that if you do not voice your opinion or speak up for yourself, things may not go well. Be honest, as this is an area where everyone struggles.) Pray right now that the Lord will give you wisdom on how to overcome what is keeping you from taking those steps.

## **Read Together James 3:4-6**

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. 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.

1. James uses the illustration of a ship to remind us that the rudder guides the ship wherever the pilot directs it. Who should be the pilot of your tongue?
2. What are some practical ways you can yield your speech to the Lord and His will more consistently? It might mean counting to ten before you speak, allowing yourself time to think rather than react. It could mean cutting back on texting or email or social media posts. List three ideas that will be most helpful to you, and implement them this week.

## **In Closing**

As you end the study today, pray together for self-control with regard to your mouth. Pray also for wisdom, asking the Lord to open your eyes and your heart to what His Word truly says regarding your speech. Ask Him for the understanding to use your mouth well and not for evil.

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Before session 2, complete the “On Your Own Between Sessions” section below. Consider starting the next session by asking people to share what they learned from the following exercises.

## On Your Own Between Sessions

### *A Firestorm*

The Oakland Firestorm of 1991 started as a small grass fire in the Berkeley Hills. Strong Diablo winds caused that grass fire to spread quickly. By the time it was contained, it had consumed 1520 acres as well as more than 3500 homes, apartments, and condos. This was one of the most expensive fires in the history of our nation, with damages estimated at \$1.5 billion.

What had taken years to build was destroyed in only a matter of hours. The tongue can do similar damage, especially in relationships. During your personal time in this study, reflect on a situation when your words or someone else’s words damaged a relationship. Ask the Lord to forgive where there was wrong and to heal what has been broken. Also ask Him to reveal any lies that Satan has planted in your mind or in the other person’s mind as a result of these words, and to replace them with His truth.

Take a moment to write down any of these truths He brings to your mind as you pray.

### **A Tree and Its Fruit**

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).

Fill in the list with the fruit or the contents of the object. Indicate whether this fruit is good or bad.

Object	Fruit or Contents
orange tree	_____
grapevine	_____
fig tree	_____
freshwater lake	_____

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Notice how each item bears fruit or has content that resembles its source. It cannot produce things outside of what it is. Yet James tells us the mouth produces both good and bad. This is because of what James calls “double-mindedness” in James 1:8 (nasb).

Look up James 1:7-8 and write the verses here.

Some characteristics of double-mindedness include compromise, shifting between peace and anxiety, giving in to unhealthy habits, and incompetence with the Word of God.

Matthew 7:16-20 tells us that we can identify people by their fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit.

1. What kind of tree are you, and what kind of fruit do you produce when it comes to your mouth?
2. How might the fruit you produce negatively affect those around you—especially with regard to how they view God and Christianity?

## **A Burning Bush**

Read Exodus 4:1-13.

1. What was Moses’s first response to God (verse 1)?
2. What did God do and say to demonstrate His power to Moses (verses 2-9)?
3. What was Moses’s next response to God (verse 10)?
4. How did the Lord respond to Moses’s claim that he could not speak (verses 11-12)?

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5. Have you ever felt as if God asked you to do or say something you were not qualified for? What was your response? Many of us respond like Moses and doubt that we can accomplish what God has asked us to do. Based on God's multiple responses to Moses, how do you think He wants to respond to you?
  
6. Can you trust Him to be Lord of your lips and God in your gums so you can be a voice for Him in whatever area He is calling you? If so, list two specific areas where you need to depend on God to give you the words to say, and then pray that He will give you grace and wisdom in each of those situations.

## **Open Day Experiment**

Pick a day this week to experiment with God being the Lord of your lips. Shortly after you wake up, talk with God. Indicate your desire to yield your thoughts and your words to Him and His will for His glory. Then as you go through the day—breakfast, commute, work, lunch, family time, a trip to the corner store, a visit with friends...keep this in mind. You are willing to let God guide your heart and your speech. You don't need to plan to say anything religious. Just be open to saying whatever God brings to your mind in any situation.

This might mean paying attention to the people around you. What needs do they have, and how can your words make a difference? How can you show them the love of Christ through what you say or do not say? It might mean taking some extra time with a friend or family member who needs to talk. Or God might throw a challenge your way. Will you face this willingly, trusting in His help and wisdom?

## **Experiment Follow-Up**

After trying the Open Day experiment, talk about it with someone else. Was it good, weird, hard, instructive, life-changing, pointless...?

Consider talking about it when you gather for the next session of Watch Your Mouth.