

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

I Have Questions / Week on Words

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not **keep a tight rein on their tongues** deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

JAMES 1:26 NIV

DAY 1

Have you ever said something and immediately regretted it? Or said something and were really proud of how you put the words together? Or have you ever said something and 10 minutes later, have no memory of it? It's easy for us to go through a full day and not think twice about the things we say. But in this verse, James tells us to keep a "tight rein" on our tongues. In other words, give our tongues a short leash. Imagine a dog you are trying to train. The shorter the leash, the more control you have. The same is true with our tongues. We want to stay in control of them. Why? Because as followers of Jesus, what we say and do reflects back on God. People get an idea of what God is like by watching how we live and listening to what we say.

Today, before you speak, ask yourself this question: "Will what I'm about to say show someone God or give them a reason to not want anything to do with Him?"

"For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

MATTHEW 12:37 NIV

DAY 2

Words are powerful. Our experiences tell us this. Words can build people up or tear people down. This verse from Matthew is another way of saying how powerful words can be. They show people what we're really like—what's really on the inside of us. The words we use are like a window into what is going on beneath the surface. So what are our words telling people about who we really are?

Think back on some of the conversations you have had lately. Imagine you were listening in on yourself. Based on your words alone, what kind of person would you think you are? **Write down any observations you have, and spend time talking to God about your words.**

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

PSALM 34:13 NIV

DAY 3

Putting today's verse into practice is easy, right? Not exactly. The problem with controlling your tongue is that it can feel impossible. Just ask James, the brother of Jesus (see James 3:8). But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. This verse tells us to keep our lips from telling lies. Think back on your day and week. Have there been times when you stretched the truth? When you were quiet when you should have spoken up? Or spoken up when it would have been better to stay quiet? How have your words hurt you or others? And who can you ask for help from in taking more control of your words?

Invite a trusted mentor, teacher, or coach into your life for the next 24 hours to help you observe how you use your words. They may catch things you never knew you said!

They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips.

PSALM 140:3 NIV

DAY 4

The book of Psalms is like a book of poetry. In fact, a lot of the psalms would have been sung or recited. This verse uses something found in a lot of the poems in Psalms. It's saying the same thing twice, in two different ways, as a way to make a strong point. And what is the point? The Psalmist is saying evil men (that's the "they") use their words as a sort of poison.

We've all had experiences with people who use their words as a way to hurt or attack. Maybe we've even been that person. But none of us wants to be known as an "evil" person. None of us wants our reputation to be damaged because of the words we use.

This week, make the decision to use your words, not as poison, but as medicine. Encourage someone. Say thank you more often. Look for ways to lift others up.

Whoever would love life and see good days must **keep their tongue from evil** and their lips from deceitful speech.

1 PETER 3:10 NIV

DAY 5

Have you ever bent the truth, told a "little white lie", or maybe only said part of the truth without revealing everything to save yourself? "White lies" can sometimes seem totally innocent, but the truth is, it's still named a "lie" and is deceitful speech. To live a life of complete integrity, we must learn that honest speech includes the whole truth.

When you find yourself making the truth larger than life or covering up parts of the truth to make a story better, ask yourself, "What am I trying to hide?" **Spend some time praying this week about the emotions tied to the "little white lies" we tell every day.** Then ask God to give you the confidence to speak in only the complete truth.

Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 NIV

DAY 6

Think back on a time when someone encouraged you. Maybe it was a coach, a parent, an older sibling or a teacher. We know from experiences that hearing the words "good job" go a long way. They stick. It may not seem like it, but our words have the potential to do the same thing for others. We can use our own words to make deposits in someone else's life, building them up in a way that only we can.

Today, write a thank you note to an adult in your life who has encouraged you, or impacted you in some way.

Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips.

PSALM 141:3 NLT

DAY 7

Break it down. Sometimes, the best way to memorize Scripture is to break it down into parts. And while you do, think about each part of the verse and what it means to you.

Memorize the first part of this verse: "Take control of what I say." Read it, think about the words you use each day and say to others, read these words out loud again, then close your eyes and say them from memory. Then, memorize the rest of the verse and ask yourself the same questions.