



Taming the Tongue

- A recent study, involving only college students, showed that both genders use about the same number of words per day: 16,000.
- The most important things we say require very few words.
- Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 – Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools... ² Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.



Taming the Tongue

- Not only do we use too many words, we often choose ones intended to hurt or manipulative others, or justify ourselves.
- "One reason we can hardly bear to remain silent is that it makes us feel so helpless. We are so accustomed to relying upon words to manage and control others. If we are silent, who will take control? God will take control, but we will never let him take control until we trust him. Silence is intimately related to trust." (Foster)



Taming the Tongue

• "Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." (Ben Franklin)

• "It is better to remain silent at the risk of being thought a fool, than to talk and remove all doubt of it."
(Maurice Switzer)



Taming the Tongue

James 3:5-10 – ⁵ The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell... No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

Taming the Tongue

• The spiritual practices of solitude and silence can help us "tame the tongue."
• "Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening. Simply to refrain from talking, without a heart listening for God, is not silence." (Foster)

Learning Solitude from Jesus

- Matthew 4:1 – Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
- Jesus spends 40 days alone in the wilderness - a precursor to his transition into public ministry.
- Times of solitude help us prepare for and adjust to major life changes.



Learning Solitude from Jesus

- Luke 6:12-13 – Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them...
- Jesus spent an entire night alone in solitude and prayer before choosing 12 men to follow him closely and share in his ministry.
- Times of solitude guide our hearts and minds when making important decisions.



Learning Solitude from Jesus

- Matthew 14:13 – ¹³ When Jesus heard what had happened [the death of John the Baptist], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.
- Jesus, responding to the news of John's death, attempts to remove himself from both the crowds and his disciples.
- Times of solitude are a key part of the healing process that God works in us when we experience grief, loss or heartbreak.



Learning Solitude from Jesus

• Matthew 14:22-23 – Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone...

• Following the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus sends his disciples ahead of him and dismisses the gathered crowd.

• Times of solitude can nourish our souls when our work becomes exhausting or we have spent too much time being needed by too many people.

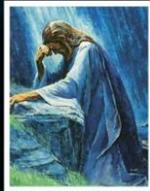


Learning Solitude from Jesus

• Matthew 26:36 – ³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray,"

• Faced with a "cup" he would rather not drink, Jesus prays alone in Gethsemane because he is "overwhelmed" with the task that lies ahead of him.

• Times of solitude are sometimes needed to remind us of the reality and presence of God's love, even in drastic circumstances.



Learning Solitude from Jesus

• If the Son of God placed such a high value on silence and solitude, taking time to listen for the Father's voice, who do we think we are to believe the world might spin out of control if we step into solitude for a moment or still our speech for an hour?

• "In the midst of noise and confusion, we can be settled into a deep inner silence. Whether alone or among people, we always carry with us a portable sanctuary of the heart." (Foster)

Closing Reflections

- Think of a time recently when you used too many words, or the wrong words, in order to hurt someone, manipulate someone, or justify yourself. Repent and ask God to teach you how to tame your tongue.
- Are you facing a major life change? A big decision? A recent heartbreak? An overwhelming task? Exhaustion? Take this moment to sit in silence and listen for God.
- Choose a day this week to spend 15 minutes alone and silent.



Deeper Waters
Seeking Solitude
