

# LIVING HOLY

**Life Application:** Communicating with others in a manner that reflects holiness of heart and a dedication to God.

**Key Verse for Meditation:** For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. – 1 Peter 3:10

**Focus Scriptures:** Malachi 3:16; Matthew 12:34-37; Ephesians 4:29-31; James 3:2-13

## The Power of Encouragement

Have you ever been encouraged by someone? Perhaps a friend said just what you needed to hear at a time you were going through a hard place. It felt good, didn't it? Proverbs 15:23 tells us, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" The right thing said to the right person at the right time just fits beautifully.

An encouraging word can make so much difference in a person's life. I remember an incident that took place shortly after I became a Christian. Out of the blue, the thought came to my mind, Is there a God? It shocked me! I thought, What a strange

thing! Through all my years of being unsaved, I had tried to convince myself that there was no God. I figured that if I could just believe that, then the things I heard

at church wouldn't matter. I could go my own way and not worry about someday standing condemned before God. Then, after God laid heavy conviction on my heart, I had prayed through to salvation. I had a new life in Christ, and I felt like

I never had in my life. Then, all of a sudden, I got a thought like this. Where did it come from? I didn't know what to do with



**Lesson Key:** Speech is one aspect of life which reveals character, and godly words from a pure heart can enlighten sinners of the love of God and the beauty of the Christian life. As holy people, set apart for God and His service, we should take care that God is glorified by our words and that His righteousness is manifested in our communication with those around us.

that thought, and I suspect my family had a sense that I was going through something. One night my aunt and uncle were visiting us, and my uncle decided to drive back to their house to get something. He asked me, "Why don't you come along for the ride?" I thought, He probably wants to encourage me. Well, I was right on track.

Now, I had never mentioned my concern to anyone. I had never said that I was wondering what to do with thoughts, especially a thought like the one that had come to me. It seemed so off-the-wall. But as we were driving down the street, my uncle said, "You know, even as Christians, sometimes thoughts will come into our minds. Even thoughts like, Is there a God?" I sat there and thought, Whew! Okay. I think I am going to make it. I'm not unusual. Other people have gone through the same thing. I was simply amazed at how much God cared—the fact that He allowed my uncle to use as an example the very thought that had come to my mind. God showed me right there that He was concerned about me. Oh yes, encouragement has a place in our spiritual lives!

We have the power to encourage or discourage both ourselves and others. We can make someone feel like things are always going to be all right in serving God, or we can put a question mark in someone's mind.

Perhaps you have been with a group of people and when you left, you thought, I feel good. I'm encouraged about this Christian life. That discussion was a real boost! On the other hand, perhaps you have had the experience of leaving a group discussion feeling a little depressed or confused. What makes the difference? It all depends on whether the people you talked with were encouraging or discouraging in their conversation. Were they thrilled and talking about the things of God, or were they talking about something that would tear down faith and raise doubts in your mind?

When people leave your presence, are they spiritually encouraged or discouraged? Our prayer should be, "Lord, make me an encouragement. Help me to uplift and strengthen others in the way. Help me to be an example of one who is encouraged in the Lord." – *From a sermon by Dwight Baltzell*



## For Personal Study

1. According to Matthew 12:36-37, for what will we give an account to God?

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2. How will having a pure heart and an awareness that we are set apart for God influence our speech? See Matthew 12:34.

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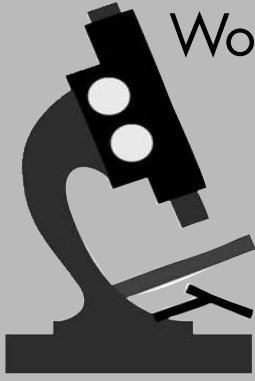
3. What types of speech will come from a pure and holy heart? Psalm 35:28; 37:30; Proverbs 15:26; Ecclesiastes 3:7; Isaiah 50:4; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Ephesians 4:25, 29; James 1:19

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## Word Search

In James 3:7-8, the writer presents a metaphor—that of taming animals. He says that every kind of beast, bird, reptile, and sea creature can be tamed by mankind. The word translated *tamed* in verse 7 means “subdued” or “brought under control.” In Genesis, God gave man dominion over all of the animal kingdom, so man has the capacity to subdue and control them. The tongue, though, is like a wild beast no human being can bring under control. No person can tame the tongue—but God can! The Psalmist said, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay. . . . And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God” (Psalm 40:2-3). A new heart produces new speech!



“How many people have I seen fall into sin by speaking, yet scarcely anyone have I ever seen sin by keeping silent.” – *Ambrose of Milan, one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the fourth century*

## Lesson from a Chimney

Many things can characterize winter in Poland, but when I look back at my time there, I will always remember one thing—coal smoke.

One day, as I was walking home from work I noticed a scene that was quite poignant. Three houses side by side were burning coal in their furnaces. Smoke was billowing out of the chimney of each house, but each plume was a different color. The first chimney’s smoke was a dark, dingy grey, while the second one was lighter but brownish in color, and the last was a slightly off-white color. I was puzzled by this for a moment but then remembered something that my high school biology teacher had told us, “The quality of coal determines the amount of smoke it will produce. Cheap coal produces a lot of smoke; more expensive coal produces less.”

Another day I was walking in town and the coal smoke became unbearable. Someone was burning really low-grade coal, and the smoke was practically suffocating me. It was so thick that it obscured the path in front of me, making it hard to see. The smoke was so strong that I finally had to wrap my scarf around my mouth and nose to keep from breathing it in. I hurried to get through the cloud of it as fast as I could!

A parallel can be drawn between the condition of the coal and the state of one’s heart. We read in Matthew 12:34, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The quality of what a person has in his heart will be shown in his speech. If we allow questionable content to settle in our hearts, the evidence of it will show in our speech.

Take a look at your speech today. What effect does it have on others? Does it, like the heavy coal smoke, suffocate the people around you? Does it make them hurry away from you? Does it hinder others instead of helping them? If this is the case, take time today to check the contents of your heart. Make sure you have good, quality “fuel” and your speech will show it. – *From a Daybreak devotional*





# Wreckers or Repairers?

In Ephesians 4:29, we are instructed to use our words to edify. Paul says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying,

that it may minister grace unto the hearers." The word translated *edify* here is translated in other places as *building*. When we edify, we build up as opposed to tearing down. Anyone can tear something down, but it takes skill to build.

The same is true with words: it takes no grace whatsoever to tear down others with our words, but the grace of God is available to help us edify and build up others. The next verse says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God." We grieve the Holy Spirit if we allow corrupt communication, rather than edification, to proceed out of our mouths.

It has been said, "Some people are wreckers and others are repairers." God help us to be repairers! May we be among those who inspire others through our words. — *Excerpt from a sermon by Darrel Lee*



## Bible Background

The Word of God attaches great significance to speech. To understand that, take a concordance and look up such words as *lips, mouth, tongue, talk, words, and speech*. Then check out *edify, prophesy, teach, praise, and worship*. Finally, look over *boasting, cursing, evil speaking, reviling, swearing, oaths, slander, and flattery*.

Christianity does not, of course, reside in the form of the word spoken. However, the words one speaks are an outward expression of the inward man. The true child of God wishes to use his words for the glory of God.

4. James likened the damage the tongue can do to that of a fire (see James 3:3-5). Name at least three ways the two could be alike.

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5. How should we obey the instructions given in James 1:19 in our own lives?

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6. There is a saying that, "Small minds talk about people; mediocre minds talk about events; great minds talk about ideas." What, then, would a great Christian mind talk about?

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