



Guard Your Tongue and Your Thumbs

How often have you overheard someone speak and asked yourself, “Did they really say that?” Well, today you can also ask, “Did they really text that?” Far too often I hear stories of words being thrown around without consideration of the impact they will have on the person on the receiving end. Whether we hear the words or see the words, words can have a painful impact when used too quickly. Let’s reflect on what it means to guard your tongue and your thumbs!

I did not even know how to respond. It was yet another example of inconsiderate communication. In a time of despair, having just learned about the death of a loved one, this person needed to tell someone. So she turned to a friend. The “friend” in turn turned to technology and offered condolences to the family via Facebook (unrestricted by the way) with the potential for the entire world to see the message. Now think about this for a moment, in the early hours of receiving this kind of news do you suppose all the family members of this individual were notified? Probably not. With this person’s condolences (announcement) anyone who might be connected with this family might be calling and asking what happened before the family even knows. What are people thinking? It just makes me shake my head in frustration.

Technology has stolen our capacity to think things through before we speak. If only everyone would take a few minutes to think about the impact their words might have on others there would be fewer misunderstandings, fewer misinterpretations, fewer heartbreaks and fewer requests for forgiveness. At least when we speak to others live we have to breathe between words and can catch ourselves before we say too much, say the wrong thing, or say something we can never take back. With texting and Facebook our thumbs rattle the keys with such speed that we run the risk of pushing send long before we realize how the message may be received or who might see the words being sent.

What if we always responded on impulse? Disaster! We cannot always respond on impulse. Quick responses are necessary in emergency situations, but those responses rarely require words. So, when using words we need to take the time to consider how they will affect the

person receiving them. We have all heard the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”. That’s a lie! Words hurt people all the time. Words are sharper than swords when used hastily without thinking. Take back what you’ve said? It can’t be done.

We have to stop the words before they come out. We must guard our tongue (and our thumbs). Before you open your mouth, open your phone, or open Facebook, ask yourself these questions, what do I really want to say, how can I say it in a way that will lift the person up, do I need to say it now, is there another way to convey my support, and is it better to say nothing.

In the song by Hawk Nelson titled, Words, he sings, “Words can build you up, Words can break you down, Start a fire in your heart or Put it out”. What do you want your words to do for others?

You can be sure that evil is behind hasty responses and we can be tricked into believing that words don’t hurt, but God gives us the gift of discernment to choose between what is helpful and what is hurtful. I encourage you to ask him for guidance when you speak to others and before you grab your electronic device and punch in a message for the entire world to see. I have no doubt he will guard your tongue and your thumbs.

Questions to ponder:

- When have my words been misunderstood and hurtful?
- How can I practice restraint in speaking too quickly?
- How will I use God’s guidance to communicate healing words?
- How will I determine the best form of communication for each situation?

May God’s Peace Be With You,
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Phrase of the week:
**Hold your
tongue**



Thoughtless speech is like the stabs of a sword, but the tongue of the wise is healing. Proverbs 12:18 (New World Translation)