

## Control of the tongue

Words are powerful.

Our words can be used for good. They give life, bring healing and encourage others. Words make a positive difference in the lives of our families and friends.

A kind word spoken at just the right time is life-giving. It settles well and encourages us. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver,” Proverbs 25:11 (ESV).

Words can also be hurtful. Relationships can be damaged or broken when words spew carelessly. Our words, or how we say them, can leave a trail of pain.

We learn in James 3 that the tongue is like the rudder of a ship. That very small rudder controls the direction of the ship. Similarly, our tongues control the direction of our lives! We need God’s help to tame the tongue. He will give an awareness and a desire to change.

Let’s learn to be intentional with our words — to replace negative, unhealthy comments with life-giving, grace-filled encouragement.

To begin taming the tongue:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to alert you when your words are not being used for good.
- Think and pray before speaking.
- What words make your day? Say them to others.
- Walk away from gossip, or, speak up on behalf of someone.
- Apologize for careless words.
- A half-truth might make you look better but resist it. Tell the whole truth.
- For every necessary negative, tell two positives first.
- Don’t jump to conclusions. Ask others to clarify, “What I heard you say was ...”
- If angry, walk away. Pray for that person and for yourself.