

STEWARDSHIP OF LANGUAGE

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 39
 Luke 16:1-13
 James 3
 Ephesians 4:29; 5:3-5

MEMORIZE: Colossians 4:5, 6

1. Do a word study on “idle,” “useless”—Greek: argeo, argos #691, 692. Set up a chart with three columns and compare the way the word is translated in three translations (no paraphrases). Chart every occurrence of the word.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me!” A harmless and childish taunt hurled at the one who is abusing the child with words? No! A bankrupt philosophy. In reality names hurt more than sticks and stones. Physical bruises heal, but the emotional scars left by words linger for years, sometimes for a lifetime. Today, emotional abuse is recognized to be as dangerous as physical abuse. If name-calling did not hurt, the taunt would not be hurled back at the offender.

Language in the world is becoming more and more abusive as people curse at each other over the slightest inconvenience or provocation. Words not permitted in the media a few years ago are now standard, no longer regarded as improper. The Christian’s mind is bombarded throughout the day with blasphemy, cursing and immoral language. There seems to be no end to sexual innuendos as well as to statements that are openly immoral.

The Christian struggles for purity of life which includes purity of speech. He struggles because his old self still wants to express itself inappropriately in anger, unkindness and filthiness. James warns us that the tongue is the last bodily member to be brought under control (3:2, 8). Complete control of the tongue indicates that a person has reached perfection. Let’s strive to bring the tongue under control.

2. Compare the stewardship of Joseph in Genesis 39 and the unrighteous steward in Luke 16:1-13 in reference to language.
3. What does language reveal about a person? Matthew 12:34; cf. 15:17-20
4. Our words become a basis for judgment. What is meant by “idle” or “careless” words? (Try to give three answers.) Matthew 12:36

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THE PERFECT MAN James 3:1-4

5. What is the characteristic of a mature Christian?
6. Why are we cautioned about becoming teachers of the Word?
7. Is this passage addressed to teachers only?
8. How did David deal with the problem of speech in his life? Psalm 141:3, 4
9. The standard for Christians is expressed in Colossians 4:5, 6. What is the primary reason given for gracious speech?
10. What two things should characterize the Christian's speech? What is meant by each? Colossians 4:6
11. If you are not characterized by these traits in speech, what is true of your witness to the lost? Colossians 4:5
12. If you are characterized by these traits, what will be true of your witness to the lost? Colossians 4:6

THE POISONOUS MEMBER James 3:5-8

13. List five negative characteristics of the tongue.

14. How does our tongue defile every other area of our lives? Proverbs 15:1

THE PHARISAICAL MEMBER James 3:9-12

15. What problem is presented in this text? Why?

16. How does this contradict all of nature?

17. What could we do positively with the tongue?

Psalm 51:15; 63:3, 5

Psalm 119:13

Ephesians 4:29

18. What should we not do with language? Ephesians 4:29

19. To what areas would you apply this prohibition?

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20. What kind of language is condemned in Ephesians 5:3-5?

21. Is humor condemned per se?

There are other areas of humor that should be avoided by the Christian. We should not make light of hell. The world wants to joke about hell to avoid thinking seriously about it. We cannot joke about it—it is an awful reality.

We should not joke about God since that is irreverent and would involve taking His name in vain. Nor should we deride the Lord's work or use the hymns of the faith and spiritual songs in levity. They speak of eternal truths and are expressions of worship. If we want to have fun and laugh, we should use secular music to that end.

We must be careful not to joke in a way that hurts another person's feelings.

22. Using a dictionary, write a definition for "minced oath" (look under the word "minced").

23. For what are each of the following a euphemism or minced oath?

Darn
Gee, jee
Golly
Gosh
Heck

24. Write a brief essay regarding your goal for good stewardship in the area of language.