
Words of Truth

Lay Thine Hand Upon Thy Mouth

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Imagine a room full of people. The ages range from young to old. People are sitting at separate tables engaging in meaningful discussions. There is a child roaming about the room. This child is interested in everything being said at every table. This child goes around and interjects in every discussion possible. People begin to ask the child, “where are your parents?” Each table begins to slowly change their discussions to how rude this child is and how terrible the parents are. This child has not been taught any manners. This child does not belong in these discussions. You’ve likely seen something like this in your lifetime.

Children often do talk too much. They do throw themselves into discussions that they do not belong in. Unguided children bring shame upon their parents (Proverbs 29:15). However, children aren’t the only ones that need to learn that there is a time to speak and more often than not, a time not to speak.

In the United States of America we are afforded the right to speak. We also have the right to remain silent. God tells us that there is a time to speak and a time to remain silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). The problem is, people tend to exercise the right to speak much more than the right to remain silent. We are easily influenced by the world we live in (I Corinthians 15:33). The world we live in is full of people who talk too much. Thus, we are regularly taught by the words and deeds of others that if something is on your mind you should just speak it. Should we just speak our minds?

Think about these Scriptures: *“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise... Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (Proverbs 10:19 and James 1:19-20). Learning to control one’s tongue is the greatest task of self-control we all face (James 3:1-18). If you read the Scriptures just referenced you saw that if you can control your tongue you can control your whole body. So, why do so many people fail to put forth successful effort in learning how to shut up?

Learn To Know How To Cease From Talking

There are times when we have to keep ourselves from talking at all. Amongst many words of wisdom recorded in the book of Proverbs, we read this statement: *“If thou hast*

done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth” (Proverbs 30:32). This one point, while others could certainly be made, is how we are going to simplify what could be a difficult subject matter. From this one Scripture, while others could be used, we find that if our motives or our mindset is not right; we should not talk.

Reflecting upon our thoughts before we speak means we have to think before we talk (Proverbs 15:28). Our thinking about the words we will speak is something grounded in educating ourselves about what and when things are appropriate to say (Proverbs 16:23). We have to know what is acceptable to God (Ephesians 5:10 and Colossians 3:17). We also have to know what is appropriate to say amongst the crowd we find ourselves in at the moment (I Corinthians 9:19-23, I Corinthians 10:23-33, and Colossians 4:5-6). With all there is to think about, just in the brief points we are considering, what do you think you should say at times when your thinking is not clear?

Serious thought must be behind all we say and do for everything is going to be judged by our Lord (II Corinthians 5:10). Additionally, everything we say and do is going to be judged by people around us too (I Peter 3:8-17). Sometimes, we will be judged by others very unfairly (Matthew 5:11 and Romans 3:8). Therefore, we have to act in ways that show us righteous even under unfair conditions (Titus 2:7-8 and I Peter 2:11-12). All of that requires us to be able to think clearly BEFORE we speak. Is what I am saying, wherein liberty abounds, acceptable before God AND man (Romans 14:18)?

If you cannot discern your motives, what is right before God, or what is acceptable before men; it is time to cover your mouth. We are supposed to KNOW and even be convinced conscientiously that what we are saying is right (Romans 14:23). How can you do that if you cannot think clearly? For example, how much trouble can we get into if we speak when we are carnally angry (Proverbs 14:17 and Ecclesiastes 7:9)?

Space very often limits these studies, and such is the case here. I am going to have to leave much that could be written unwritten. However, what has been written should be a springboard for your studies of when to exercise your right to speak or be silent. Even when it comes to sharing the Scriptures, there are many times to remain silent (ex. Matthew 7:6).

Conclusion

As an adult, how many times have you been like the child in the room wondering about from discussion to discussion? Have you gone about into discussions you don't belong in? Do you need someone to monitor you and tell you when you should stop talking? All of us, like children, need a reminder that we have a Father in Heaven observing all we say. Therefore, learn when to cover your mouth and let thy words be few (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Remember, words are powerful enough both to save and condemn (Matthew 12:34-37). What we have learned is that there is much to consider BEFORE we speak in most cases.