



"Language most shews a man: Speak, that I may see thee."  
—Ben Jonson

**02-May-25**

## **Consider Before You Speak**

In [Hebrews 6:1](#), the author tells us to put the discussion of basic Christian tenets behind us and move forward to perfection. As he had just written in [Hebrews 5:14](#), by practicing God's way of life, we will train our senses to discern good and evil so that we can apply the spiritual principles of God's law in our lives and become more like our Savior [Jesus Christ](#).

Put another way, we are not just to know the fundamentals of Christianity. We have to put them into practice, and as we do, we will better understand how to use them. We could apply this to many areas of Christian living, but as time grows short, one area we would do well to consider is that of the use of the tongue. It gets us all in trouble!

Typically, we would study James 3 concerning the subject of the tongue. The apostle tells us, "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body" ([James 3:2](#)). We, however, will turn to other scriptures and their equally helpful points.

Jesus says in [Matthew 7:6](#), "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." Some commentators have rearranged this to read,

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs, lest they turn and tear you in pieces; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet." Regardless, He wants us to consider how we conduct ourselves in the handling of His Word.

Having been an animal husbandry major and worked with hogs, I can readily appreciate the picture this example presents. The pearl represents something exceedingly valuable, in this case, the Word of [God](#). It is easy to visualize a farmhand slopping the hogs with all the attendant aromas and seeing the pigs eager to get at their food. Then, the farmhand offers a priceless jewel to them, and they grind it down in the fetid slime with their feet, having no grasp of the value of what they have been offered.

Indeed—especially in today's religious and political climate—presenting the truth to the wrong people could cause them to turn and tear at us like wild animals. Jesus is teaching us to be wise in how we choose to spread His truth to others. We must size up our audience and calculate whether it will be receptive or antagonistic. Peter writes that we should "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" ([1 Peter 3:15](#)), but God expects us to use proper judgment in our responses. We need not be afraid to speak God's Word to others, but we should be sensible with whom we share it.

In [Luke 4:16-29](#), Jesus' neighbors in Nazareth tried to kill Him out of hatred for the truth He spoke to them. Similar violent reactions occurred several times during His ministry (see, for instance, [John 8:59](#); [10:31](#)), and the religious leaders eventually used Rome to crucify Him. He warns us in [John 16:2](#), "The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." If the unbelieving world did this to Him, it will surely do it to His servants ([John 15:20](#)).

Our Savior expects us to consider those to whom we are speaking. If it is clear that they are not at all interested, so thoroughly ingrained in their false beliefs to disregard the truth, or hardcore atheists, then He tells us to back away, not getting involved in something that may hurt us. As commentator Matthew Henry writes:

Our Lord Jesus Christ is very tender of the safety of His people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will turn again and rend them. . . . Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of His own laws, and precious is the blood of His saints.

However, there is still more to consider when answering someone who is not aligned with the truth. Some think that what Solomon writes in [Proverbs 26:4-5](#) is contradictory, but it is really sound advice on when we should answer others in these kinds of situations: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

God wants us to develop the [wisdom](#) to know when to speak in response to a fool and when we should not. When confronted by an individual who proceeds to make his point with wild exclamations or outrageous ideas—that is, foolishly—we are not to answer him in kind. In other words, we should be careful not to respond in the same manner, descending to his level. Do not answer a fool foolishly. It is better to remain silent than to respond with equally crazy and illogical answers. God expects our responses to matter and mean something. So, if the "fool" is incapable of receiving the truth, then the best thing to do is not to answer.

On the other hand, if the issue is important, if our silence would confirm to him what he is saying, and if we feel a proper answer would set him on the right track, then, by all means, we should answer him in wisdom. We will likely not be as astute as Jesus, who was masterful in silencing those who attacked His teaching, but if our answers soundly employ God's Word, we will give a wise and truthful response.

Sometimes a wise answer might be to ask a pertinent question, as Jesus often did (for instance, see [Matthew 21:23-27](#), where His remaining silent would have been an admission that He had no authority). Perhaps quoting a scripture or two that explains or even disproves what has been alleged is the best course. At other times, sheer logic does the trick.

How should our answers be presented? Again, [1 Peter 3:15](#) gives us sound advice. The apostle instructs us to "sanctify [or *set apart*] the Lord God in your hearts." This is the first and most important step: We must realize who we are responding for and fear and honor Him most of all with our response. Other scriptures assure us that God will give us the words to say, especially in more dangerous situations ([Luke 21:15](#); [Acts 6:10](#)).

At the end of [1 Peter 3:15](#), the apostle writes that we should answer "with [meekness](#) and fear." In other words, we need to hold our emotions in check and not respond with anger, harshness, or hostility. Instead, we should express the Christian virtues of "meekness" (Greek *prautes*, "gentleness, imperturbability, [self-control](#)") and "fear" (Greek *phobos*, "reverential fear [of God]"). We must treat our opponents with dignity and humility, remembering our place under God.

Finally, answer just what was asked and nothing more. If we go any further, we will probably open up more questions and perhaps more trouble. In our first blush of God's calling, many of us tried to convert others, learning the hard way that others do not want to be converted. As [Hebrews 5:14](#) suggests, by our practice of handling ourselves in response to questions about God's Word, over time we will grow in our ability to deal appropriately with those who ask.

As we do this, we should never forget that we represent God in the wisdom of our responses, and if we do it well, there is great satisfaction. As [Proverbs 15:23](#) says, "A man has [joy](#) by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!"

- John O. Reid

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## New Transcripts

### [1814-PM: Psalm 51 \(Part Four\): Psalm 51:13-19](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 19-Apr-25

**[1815: Simplifying Life \(Part Two\) Conserving and Redeeming Time](#)**

Given by David F. Maas on 26-Apr-25

**[BS-AC09: Acts \(Part Nine\)](#)**

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 08-Nov-88

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**From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

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**From the Archives: Featured Article**

**[The Tongue: Our Tool of Power](#)**

by Staff

Remember "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me"? In most cases, this is a lie. The hurtful words that we speak can create scars that last longer than any physical scar that sticks and stones may cause. Christians need to learn to harness the power of the tongue.

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**Featured Audio Schedule**

**Friday Night Bible Study**

The next Bible Study (Friday 02-May-25) will be **Acts (Part Seven)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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