

**30 DAYS TO
TAMING YOUR
TONGUE**

DEBORAH SMITH PEGUES



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Contents

Prologue	7
1. The Lying Tongue	11
2. The Flattering Tongue	17
3. The Manipulating Tongue	21
4. The Hasty Tongue	25
5. The Divisive Tongue	29
6. The Argumentative Tongue	32
7. The Boasting Tongue	36
8. The Self-Deprecating Tongue	39
9. The Slandering Tongue	42
10. The Gossiping Tongue	46
11. The Meddling Tongue	50
12. The Betraying Tongue	55
13. The Belittling Tongue	58
14. The Cynical Tongue	61
15. The Know-It-All Tongue	64
16. The Harsh Tongue	67
17. The Tactless Tongue	70
18. The Intimidating Tongue	75
19. The Rude Tongue	80

20. The Judgmental Tongue	85
21. The Self-Absorbed Tongue	89
22. The Cursing Tongue	93
23. The Complaining Tongue	97
24. The Retaliating Tongue	101
25. The Accusing Tongue	105
26. The Discouraging Tongue	109
27. The Doubting Tongue	114
28. The Loquacious Tongue	118
29. The Indiscreet Tongue	121
30. The Silent Tongue	124
Epilogue	129
Appendix A: Daily Tongue Evaluation Checklist	133
Appendix B: Alternative Uses of the Tongue	137
Appendix C: Arsenal of Tongue Scriptures	139

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Prologue

Teachers often teach that which they need to learn themselves. I am no different. I am writing this book first and foremost for myself. I desire a wholesome tongue, one that always speaks what is pleasing to God. I have learned what James, the brother of Jesus, meant when he said, “No man can tame the tongue” (JAMES 3:8). Neither New Year’s resolutions nor counting to ten nor other self-efforts will prevail in conquering this unruly member. To “tame” means to bring from a state of unruliness to a state of submission. A person would have to live in total isolation to begin to accomplish such a feat with his tongue. Even then, his self-talk would probably be negative in some way and therefore rob him of total victory.

The only hope for the tongue is the Spirit of God. The tongue must be bridled and brought into subjection by Him on a daily basis. How do we begin the process? One of my spiritual mentors gave me a very simple tip for dealing with the negative

propensities of the natural man, or the “flesh.” He said, “Whatever the flesh tells you to do, do the opposite.” Well, that’s a good place to start.

As you skimmed the list of the negative uses of the tongue in the table of contents, you may not have readily admitted that you are guilty of many of them. However, as you read this book with a desire to grow and to “own” behavior you may have been denying, you will experience the freedom that only comes with embracing the truth. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (JOHN 8:32 KJV). In this book I will challenge you to join me on a 30-day quest to become sensitive to the negative uses of the tongue and to “fast” or abstain from these verbal violations of godly principles.

Fasting, normally abstinence from food, is a spiritual discipline that few of God’s people practice on a regular basis. After several incidents in which I realized I showed little or no verbal wisdom, I concluded that a strong resolve sustained by willpower alone was not going to bring me the victory. I vowed to set aside a time of tongue fasting.

Now, I want to caution that this book is not about turning you into a Passive Patsy or a Timid Tom who avoids expressing personal boundaries, desires, or displeasure with a situation. I have learned that most

interpersonal problems will not be resolved without being confronted. However, there is a *time* and a *way* to say everything. We can rejoice knowing we are already empowered to use our tongues wisely.

The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season (ISAIAH 50:4 KJV).

Words are the *vehicle* through which we communicate our thoughts; the tongue is the *driver*. As such, it takes us to our destiny. Moving in spiritual maturity requires that we learn to speak the right words in the right season and for the right reason.

As the Holy Spirit sensitizes us to the negative uses of our tongue, we will begin to resist the temptation to drive down the wrong verbal path. If you find you are constantly at war with your tongue, I invite you to stop your harmful expressions. I guarantee you that at the end of this fast, you will become spiritually empowered as you transform your tongue into a wellspring of life.

Day 1

The Lying Tongue

*The LORD detests lying lips,
but he delights in men who are truthful.*

PROVERBS 12:22

Everything we do and say must be based upon the truth; lies make a shaky foundation for any relationship. Lying comes in four primary forms: deceitfulness, half-truths, exaggerations, and flattery. We will look at flattery in a separate chapter.

Deceitfulness

When I opened my mailbox and saw the letter from the Internal Revenue Service, my heart did not skip a beat as it had in the past. I used to dread those audits of my tax returns! Having been a faithful tither since the age of eighteen, I had learned over the years to keep a good record of my charitable giving because it usually generated an audit. However, I tended to be rather creative in interpreting the tax law in other

aspects of the return. As I stood there fingering the envelope, I knew that, whatever the nature of the inquiry, all would be well, for I had support for all of the deductions taken. I couldn't help remembering a particular audit several years back in which I feigned ignorance of the tax law to justify my claim of a nondeductible educational expense. While sitting before the auditor and trying to appear innocent, I kept thinking, *God's going to strike me dead for lying!* All of my life, my Sunday school teachers had taught me that God had no tolerance for liars. Nevertheless, I had succumbed to the temptation of a larger tax refund. So there I sat, engaging in the most blatant form of lying—plain old deceitfulness. I decided then that life was too short to bear the anxiety and the remorse of being deceitful for a few extra dollars. Peter warns us, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech” (1 PETER 3:10).

Why do some people practice deception? Many do it for financial gain, for social advantage, to hide immoral acts, or to obtain other “benefits.” Jacob, whose name meant “trickster,” conspired with his mother and deceived his father into giving him the birthright blessing that belonged to his brother Esau (GENESIS 27). When Esau discovered the deception,

he threatened to kill him. Jacob was forced to leave town and to live with his Uncle Laban. Notwithstanding, he had to reap the seeds of deceit that he had sown. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his daughter Leah, whom Jacob did not love. Laban further deceived Jacob by changing the terms of his employment agreement numerous times. Jacob was forced to work 14 years to marry Rachel, whom he did love. Eventually, because he abandoned his deceitful ways and became a tither, God blessed Jacob beyond his wildest imagination. He returned home after many years with a beautiful family, much abundance, and a new name: Israel.

Engaging in deceitfulness is a slap in God's face and has dire consequences. When we make a choice not to trust Him to handle a situation, we, in essence, decide He is a liar and will renege on His promise to meet every need. We then proceed to make our own way by any means necessary—even being deceptive. In doing so we forfeit the good life God had planned for us.

Half-Truths

Joan Smith took the day off on Monday. She returned to work on Tuesday and explained to her boss that she had been absent because her elderly mother

had been hospitalized. The truth of the matter is that Joan had only spent two hours at the hospital and six hours shopping! Joan's objective was to have her boss believe that she had spent the entire day at her mother's bedside. She told a half-truth.

I was once the queen of half-truths and had convinced myself I was still walking in integrity. One of my favorite half-truths was blaming lost keys for my being late to an appointment. I seemed to always misplace my keys; however, I could usually locate them within a few minutes in one of several places I knew to look. The real reason for my tardiness was usually poor time management. When I would offer my excuse, I rationalized that the portion of my statement that I verbalized was true; I had indeed searched for the keys. But I ignored the fact that the undisclosed information, like the extra minutes I spent in the bed or my decision to complete an insignificant task, would have caused the hearer to draw a different conclusion about me. My husband finally impressed upon me the painful reality that *any* intent to deceive is a lie—period.

I find it interesting that the word “integrity” derives from “integer,” which is a mathematical term. An integer is a whole number as opposed to a fraction. When we walk in integrity, we tell the whole truth

and not just a fraction or part of it. Someone was well aware of the many ways there are to lie when he suggested that court oaths charge a person to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Exaggerating

Do you often embellish a story in order to get more attention from your listener? Exaggerating may seem harmless, but it is another form of lying. The danger in exaggerating is that those who are familiar with a person’s propensity to stretch the truth will discount everything he says. This is also the paradox of exaggerating; a person stretches the truth to make something sound more believable, but then he loses his credibility because he exaggerates. I know several truth-stretchers. Their favorite words include absolute terms like “everybody,” “nobody,” and “always.” Their friends jokingly warn, “Now, you know you should only believe about half of anything she says.” What a terrible indictment. Is this how you would like to be viewed?

When you relate a story or an incident, know that it is okay to tell it with enthusiasm; just avoid the exaggerations. Stick to the facts at face value and resist the urge to be the center of attention by engaging in this form of lying.

God has sealed the destiny of every liar: “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (REVELATION 21:8 NKJV). Death means separation. The first death is the separation of the spirit from the body; the second death is eternal separation of the spirit from God. Eternal separation from my Father is too high a price to pay for any form of deceitfulness.

The psalmist knew the consequences of deceitfulness and constantly implored God to keep him out of this pit. Consider his plea. “Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue” (PSALM 120:2 KJV). Have you been trusting God by telling the truth and leaving the consequences to Him, or do you need to join the psalmist in his prayer for deliverance?

TODAY'S AFFIRMATION:

“My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse” (PROVERBS 8:7-8).

Day 2

The Flattering Tongue

*These people...flatter others
to get favors in return.*

JUDE 1:16 NLT

“How does it feel to be the most beautiful woman in the room?” According to an Internet poll of the best pickup lines, men voted this question as the most effective for flattering a woman.

Flattery is a lie covered in a bed of flowery words. Most people who engage in this dishonest communication do so to gain favor. The desired favor is not always something material or tangible; it can be an intangible benefit, such as acceptance. The flatterer may have low self-worth and believe others will like him if he compliments them.

Engaging in flattery is clear evidence of one's lack of faith in God's ability to give him favor with other people. Favor is a fringe benefit of being in right standing with our Creator.

*For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous;
you surround them with your favor as with
a shield (PSALM 5:12).*

There are many instances in the Bible of God giving His children favor with man—with no effort on their part. Consider that God gave Esther favor and the king chose her to be the queen of Persia (ESTHER 2). He gave Daniel favor with one of the king's officers, who allowed him and his three friends to select their own diet rather than eat the nonkosher food of their captors (DANIEL 1). God gave Joseph favor in Egypt, and he went from being a captive to commander of all the country's resources (GENESIS 39-41). These children of the Most High never had to resort to any form of self-effort in order to ingratiate themselves for gain or survival.

Can you think of a time that you flattered someone by giving him an insincere compliment? How did you feel afterward? Unless you have grown comfortable with such insincere behavior and have become insensitive to the Holy Spirit, flattering someone will most likely cause you to feel you have violated your personal integrity.

If you are a flatterer, understand that when you are over-complimenting a person, the flower of your words will soon wilt and lose all impact. Notwithstanding, if the person you chose to flatter is plagued

with insecurity or has received little affirmation during her life, she will welcome any kind of attention that will bolster her low self-worth. There are periods in all of our lives when we may find ourselves vulnerable to flattery. These times can occur when we feel overlooked, unappreciated, unattractive, or a host of other negative emotions that Satan brings. I remember once when I attended a church where the opportunities to bring a message at a scheduled service were few and far between. On those rare occasions when I would speak, invariably a few people would come up to me and say that I was the most awesome speaker they had ever heard. They would go on to lament the fact that I did not get more opportunities to speak at the church. Now, I have to admit that hearing such accolades did indeed stroke my ego; however, I was quick to wonder if those persons were simply trying to ingratiate themselves with me or to get me to join them in their critical attitudes about the church.

Some people use flattery as a survival tactic. Story has it that movie director Steven Spielberg was the target of a bully's verbal and physical abuse when he was a skinny 13-year-old. Fed up with the constant harassment, one day Steven flattered the bully by telling him he looked like John Wayne and should consider playing the hero in an 8mm movie he was

thinking of making about World War II. Once Steven outfitted him and cast him as a heroic squad leader, the bully was putty in his hands.*

Unlike Spielberg's bully, emotionally healthy people only appreciate sincere praise they earn for a specific distinction. Further, many can detect a compliment given to gain their favor as well as words spoken with ulterior motives. The paradox is that they will tend to look with disfavor, rather than favor, on someone who compliments them in general for no apparent reason.

Scripture is very clear on God's plans for the flatterer. "The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips..." (PSALM 12:3 KJV). Is flattery worth being cut off from the blessings of God?

TODAY'S AFFIRMATION:

"I will show partiality to no one, nor will I flatter any man; for if I were skilled in flattery, my Maker would soon take me away" (JOB 32:21-22).

* As cited at: www.anecdote.com