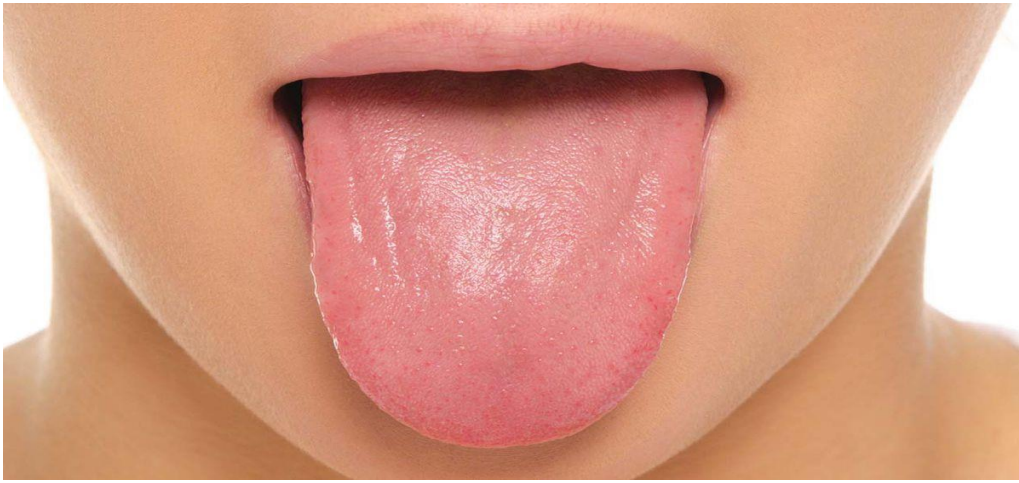


THE BATTLE OF THE TONGUE

Part 1

By John Gagliardi



*"A mass of interwoven, striated muscles interspaced with glands and fat and covered with mucous membrane" ... so defines the Encyclopaedia Britannica that little organ situated just below the nose we call the **tongue**.*

Biblically, it is that "little member" of our bodies that James 3: 5-8 describes as "... a fire, a world of iniquity ... so set among our bodies that it defiles the whole body ... and is set on fire by hell ... an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

No wonder, then, that one of the biggest battles we face, is **the battle of the tongue** – the battle to control it, this "rudder" that controls the whole ship of our lives (James 3: 4). This little "rudder" can steer our lives to destruction and shipwreck, or to peace, pleasure and prosperity.

Someone once said, "Lord make my words as sweet as honey – for tomorrow I may have to eat them," while an old Turkish proverb gives this excellent advice: "Having two ears and one tongue, we should listen twice as much as we speak."

English dramatist Seamus MacManus wrote, back in the sixteenth century, "Many a man's tongue broke his nose." US author Jessamyn West said early last century: "A broken bone can heal, but the wound a word opens can fester forever."

The tongue – this little piece of "interwoven, striated muscle" a few centimetres below our nose – literally holds the power of life and death (Proverbs 18: 21). Unless we win the battle to control it, we are like a rudderless ship, an accident looking for somewhere to happen.

The power of words is simply stupendous – God created the world by speaking its elements (including mankind) into existence (Genesis 1: 3-26), while Jesus Himself is the Living Word. Yet the infernal serpent in the Garden of Eden also used words to beguile and tempt Eve, ultimately leading to the fall of man.

In this so-called "information age", words are everywhere. They are the "currency of the realm" in this man-made kingdom of endless communication. In 1806, when Noah Webster first published his famous dictionary, it contained but 37,000 words. By 1961, it was up to 458,000 words, and the current edition contains some 700,000 words.

Today, words are cheap – they are beamed and broadcast into our minds at a ferocious rate, whether selling the latest soap powder, or a terrorist's threat to obliterate life as we know it. Words – so easy to utter, yet so difficult to take back once they are unleashed.

Jesus warns us very clearly about the danger of letting the wrong words come out: “But I say to you, that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12: 36 and 37)

In any given day, the Kingdom business professional is faced with many opportunities to do battle with his or her “little member” – it is so easy to tell a little “white” lie, to indulge in a tasty little bit of gossip, to lash out with a hurtful insult in anger, or to just settle down into a little “pity party” of complaining and murmuring.

What we do with our tongue is, as with everything else in the Christian walk, a choice – we can choose to bless or to curse, to hurt or to heal. We can speak words that build up, or words that break down – remember, “death and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Proverbs 18: 21) James warns us that if anyone considers himself religious, and “does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.” (James 1: 26)

Proverbs actually has a lot to say on the battle of the tongue:

- *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles (21: 23);*
- *A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin (26: 28);*
- *A man of perverse heart does not prosper; he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble (17: 4);*
- *He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbour, but a man of understanding holds his peace (11: 12);*
- *A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter (11: 13);*
- *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health (12: 18)*
- *Truthful lips shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment (12: 19);*
- *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness (15: 2);*
- *He who has a perverse tongue falls into evil (17: 20);*
- *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (15: 1);*
- *A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends (16: 28);*
- *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction (13: 3); and*
- *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil (15: 28).*

To control the tongue, it is clear that we must first control our thoughts – our thought life is the seed that bears fruit in our words. Proverbs 23: 7 says that as we think, so we are.

To live a Godly and overcoming life, we must then take control of our thoughts, a difficult but not impossible task. The Bible tells us unequivocally that we can, and tells us we have the weapons to do it: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 10: 3-5)

God does not command us to do anything that we cannot do, telling us to focus our thought life on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, on those things that are of good report, virtue and praise. (Philippians 4: 8)

So what are the main battles of the tongue Kingdom business professionals face on a daily basis?

In the next newsletter, we will look at some of the main battles we face involving our tongue, including:

- *Lying and deceit*
- *Gossip and slander*
- *Blasphemy and cursing*
- *Idle talk*
- *Flattery*

We will also look at strategies to control our tongue and the words we speak, and how we can finally win “The Battle of the Tongue”.