

# The Tongue: “Full of Deadly Poison” (James 3:8)

*by Bryan Gibson*

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” (Proverbs 18:21). It has great power to hurt, and great power to help. Let’s look this week at some ways the tongue can hurt—some of the poison it can spew, and then next week at some ways it can help.

## **It can hurt with lying and deceitful speech.**

“Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you” (Proverbs 4:24).

“Therefore, putting away lying, let each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25).

## **It can hurt with flattery, which is really just another form of lying.**

“A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering tongue works ruin” (Proverbs 26:28).

“A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet” (Proverbs 29:5).

“He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue” (Prov 28:23).

## **It can hurt with talebearing, backbiting, and gossiping.**

“A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Proverbs 11:13).

“An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends” (Proverbs 16:27-28).

“He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates the best of friends” (Proverbs 17:9).

“And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not” (1 Timothy 5:13).

## **It can hurt with angry words, words said in the “heat of the moment”, words said with little if any forethought.**

“A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame” (Proverbs 12:16).

“A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Proverbs 29:11).

“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 29:20).