

When Spiritual Warfare Makes You Bite Your Tongue

It was a jaw-dropping moment for me years ago when I asked the **Holy Spirit** what my biggest problem was and He told me, “Your mouth.” I expected Him to tell me I needed to **pray** more or read the Word more—or do something more. But He assured me my mouth—the very thing He’d called me to use—was my biggest weakness during that season.

Upon this surprising **revelation**, I did what you would do: I started studying Scriptures on the mouth so I could align my lips with God’s heart. I had already memorized the verse about life and death being in the power of the tongue, so I dug deeper. I discovered that if you watch your words and hold your tongue, you’ll save yourself a lot of grief (Prov. 21:23, The Message.)

But I still didn’t get it. I was missing key **revelations** from the Sermon on the Mount. I understood that a soft answer turns always wrath, alright, but didn’t quite have the self-control to offer a soft response in the face of verbal attacks. Combine that with a **prophetic** edge that tends to confront things that oppose the will of God and, well, let’s just say I sometimes had a sharp tongue in the midst of the spiritual warfare.

Exploiting My Weakness

Of course, the enemy saw the weakness and set out to exploit it so that he could serve up a plate of cold condemnation after I fell into his wicked trap. The devil has consistently motivated people to steal from me, gossip about me, persecute me, falsely accuse me and otherwise verbally attack me.

Honestly, I didn’t always handle the **spiritual warfare** so well. More than anything, I used to spend a lot of time

meditating on what people said and did. I spent a little bit of time feeling sorry for myself. And I didn't spend any time looking for how God was moving in the midst of the injustice. But the God of justice used the injustice as a training tool and eventually I started to catch on.

Through it, I learned how to keep my eyes on Him instead of man. I came to understand the tremendous power of forgiving and praying for the people the enemy uses to attack me. I've experienced the reality of God's vindication over and over again. I also discovered the true wisdom Solomon offered in Proverbs about the mouth.

Before I share with you a key the **Holy Spirit** gave me that helped me apply godly wisdom about the mouth in the midst of spiritual warfare, let me share with you a few Scriptures to consider:

- "You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth" (Prov. 6:2).
- "A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth ..." (Prov. 12:14)
- "He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction" (Prov. 13:3).
- "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth" (Prov. 15:23).
- "The heart of the righteous studies how to answer" (Prov. 15:28)
- "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth ..." (Prov. 16:23).
- "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows" (Prov. 18:6).

The 24-Hour Rule

With those Scriptures in mind, I believe the **Holy Spirit** gave me a strategy for responding to attacks, whether they come

face-to-face, via phone messages, instant messages, text messages, or e-mail. I call it the 24-hour rule. Although I do not respond to demon-inspired hate mail I receive for delivering an uncompromising word, there are times when a response to friends, family and coworkers who are moving in the wrong spirit is necessary. But that doesn't mean it's necessary immediately.

I discovered this "24-hour rule" revelation when a friend was going through a major trial. She had turned on me because she wanted me to be something only God could be in her life. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't give her what she thought she needed from me. And the **Holy Spirit** prevented me from even trying. He wanted her to depend on Him, not on me. That led to some pretty nasty e-mail and text messages over the course of a week.

It was confusing and hurtful and the temptation was to answer her in the same spirit. But I sensed the **Holy Spirit** offering sound wisdom: "When these types of messages come to you, wait 24 hours to respond." This principle has become what I call "the 24-hour rule"—and it works well. When someone comes at me with a message that hits me wrong, whether it's a co-worker, friend, family member, churchgoer—or anyone else—I don't immediately respond. I set my heart to wait 24 hours.

Of course, you can't always wait 24 hours to respond to everything. Some issues are emergent. But you can step back, take a deep breath, pray, seek wisdom from the Scriptures and let the wisdom you put in your heart teach your mouth. You can guard your mouth instead of opening your lips wide. You can avoid the snare the enemy has put before you. You can decide not to allow your lips to enter contention.

In other words, you can wait until you get over the stunned feeling that hit you when you received the message and get your heart in line with God's before you answer. Waiting also gives the person who delivered the questionable message time

to cool down or reconsider their stance. Instead of adding fleshly fuel to the fire and letting a poisonous tongue bring division by answering in the same spirit, you can wait until you have peace in your heart and respond out of that peace. You can be a peacemaker who pleases God. Amen.

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