

Russell Kelfer

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

916-B

Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight reign on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. (James 1:26 NIV)

That arresting statement, you may recall from our last lesson, seems to set the tone for this leg of our continued journey into the land of self-control; a journey which leads us now to the somewhat painful subject of the tongue. What that verse says is this: If you consider yourself spiritual, but your tongue is still not under control, you have simply deceived yourself. Your great spirituality is a myth.

In other words, the Master Physician, when giving a spiritual physical, always seems to begin by saying,

Open your mouth, my child. Now stick out your tongue... Say, ahhhh-men.

(Um - Hum) Just as I expected.

You have a heart disease, and the symptoms are visible simply by observing your tongue.

The tongue is indeed a talebearer, for it tells a seeking world what's really in your heart. What does your tongue say? Does it speak words of gentleness? Words of encouragement, words of praise? Words of peace? Words of Life? Or does it bear the marks of hostility and judgment and destruction and unholiness? Is it constant in its kindness? Or does it manifest an intermittent streak of vengeance? Is it honest in its proclamation? Or does it say what others want to hear? Is it a sugarcoated time bomb with phrases of spiritual greatness hiding barbs of sarcasm? Is it flavored with concerned sounding prayer requests that really are only gossip? In other words, what we really are we can really see by simply listening to what we say and how we say it. And what we say can be deadly says God's Word unless we learn to control our tongues.

In our last lesson we took a look at how God views the

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

potential and the power of the tongue. We took a look at James chapter 3, and the first 17 verses, and among other things, came up with these amazing statements from God's word.

Statement 1: The man or woman who is able to 'bridle' or perfectly control his or her tongue is, in essence, a perfectly mature Christian. He has his whole life under control. (Now I didn't say that—God did!)

Statement 2: Just as a tiny bit controls the movements of a great horse, and a tiny rudder the movements of a huge ship, so the tongue, though small in size, is great in potential.

It can calm hearts soothe fears motivate men to greatness save men from folly. It can also inflame hearts ignite fears move men to destruction and cause them to behave like fools. The tongue is small but great in power.

Statement 3: Tiny sparks set great fires, and the tongue is a spark-machine. Once set in motion, out of control, fires always rage.

Statement 4: Fires the tongue sets are capable of destroying whole forests of lives; and once the fires begin, they cannot be called back.

Statement 5: The tongue is a world of iniquity that contaminates the whole soul. What we say not only affects those who hear, but directly affects our own walk with God, as well.

Statement 6: The tongue sets in motion the very cycle of man's nature. One idle word, one angry destructive word, and the wheels are in motion that churn-up an ever-widening circle of evil.

Statement 7: The sins of the tongue originate in hell. Controlling the tongue is a spiritual battle, and the impure or improper words we allow to spew from our lips originate with Satan and come straight from the portals of hell itself. (Again, God said that.)

Statement 8: Every form of beast, reptile, or creature of the sea has been and can be tamed, but apart from God no man can tame the tongue. It is the fire no man can tame! Man cannot control the tongue, but God can. Therefore the issue IS spiritual and spiritually primary.

Statement 9: The world is confused by the hypocrisy of our

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

tongues. One minute we use them to praise God, the next to curse men made in HIS image. James adds, “Brethren, this ought not so to be.” “A fountain does not alternate between bitter and sweet water. A fig tree does not bear olives, nor does an olive vine figs.”

God’s tongue (the tongue of God’s child) ought not to damage to God’s reputation or God’s creation. It is God’s tongue, and God intends to control it. By God’s grace, we must let Him.

At the end of the last lesson, I asked you to ask yourself three questions during these seven days every time you began to speak. I asked you to place a sentry at the door of your lips, and before words were given freedom to pass to ask yourself these three things about your word: Is it NECESSARY? Is it MEANINGFUL? Is it DEPENDABLE?

God’s Word is always all three of the above, and His Word, in us, should be no less. So we continue this somewhat uncomfortable pilgrimage through the land of the spoken word and begin to look at some sources and some specifics where the sins of the tongue are concerned.

Our title and outline takes this form: “The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue.”

- I- Tiny Sparks and Great Fires
- II- The Tongue: Cutoff Valves and Instant Choice
- III- The Tongue: Bad Fruits from Bad Spirits
- IV- The Tongue: The Fruits of a Hostile or Negative Spirit
- V- The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

The first issue we must face in our battle with the tongue is the issue that lies at the very heart of every facet of self-control. That issue is the issue of choice. The truth is that you and I say what we say because we choose to. You can’t blame it on your parents, your personality, or your problems. You can’t blame it on your success, your sensitivity, or your spiritual gift. All of those things may affect your thoughts. But whether or not those thoughts become words are the result of deliberate choices. No one forces you to gossip. No one forces you to nag. No one forces you to argue. No one forces you to tell an off-color joke. You choose to do so.

Your will responds to either your emotions or your appetites,

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

rather than responding to the Word. So as a Christian, you are responsible for every word you speak. Look at it this way:

Pretend you are looking at a picture of your heart. Inside you see two giant reservoirs. One is labeled the mind of Satan. This was what governed your speech before you became a Christian. It may not have been all bad. It may have even often been religious. (Satan loves religion.) But it was not ever capable of producing that which was pure. For out of an evil heart there proceeds only evil things, the Scripture says. But then Jesus came into your heart, and there was placed within you “the mind of Christ.” It is capable of producing only that which is pure, only that which is lovely, and only that which is true.

Both now feed the faucet we’ve come to know as the tongue. The reservoir of the old you still contained contaminated thoughts. If allowed to do so, the tongue will continue to vocalize those thoughts and confuse the world. One moment, from the reservoir of the new you, God’s mind will issue forth God’s Praise and God’s Words. But a moment later (if allowed to) from the old you, the residue of your old nature, there will issue forth words that curse men or hurt men made in the very image of the God you just praised. “No,” James said. THIS SHOULDN’T HAPPEN! Well, what’s the solution? The solution is two-fold: one is immediate, the other eventual. But both are essential, and both are eternal.

The immediate solution is to tame your tongue. You can’t, but God can! He’s waiting for you to let Him. There is a cutoff valve just below each of these reservoirs. To operate those valves you must only choose to. In other words, as a thought comes from the old you to the tip of your tongue that’s a lie, at that instant you must choose to close that valve. And the minute you choose to refuse to lie, the truth is free to flow from the mind of Christ. You can speak the truth in love. It is God who gives you the truth and the power to speak it, but the choice was yours.

So to lie or not to lie? The choice is yours.

To gossip or not to gossip? The choice is yours.

To boast or not to boast? The choice is yours.

To nag or not to nag? The choice is yours.

To blaspheme or not? The choice is yours.

No matter how “natural” it may seem to be for you to do

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

those things, you need only choose not to, and you free God to demonstrate His mind through your lips instead. Your valve may be rusted or corroded from inactivity, but the oil of the Holy Spirit can take care of that. You simply begin choosing minute by minute to place a guard at the doorpost of your tongue, (at the valve, if you please) and refuse to let that Satanic conversation flow into your world. Remember, the moment you choose to close the valve, that moment you free God's mind to speak through your lips words that demonstrate: His Holiness His Love His Truth and His Peace.

Step 1: Learn to choose to close the valve, and stop the flow of Satan's words. That you can do IMMEDIATELY and CONTINUALLY. It's a procedure.

Step 2: You learn that it is a process. It's the process of emptying the reservoir of the old you, so that it no longer empties its garbage into the faucet of the tongue.

So in step one, you learn to choose not to allow those thoughts past your lips. In step two, you cleanse your heart of those thoughts, those spirits that are left behind from the old you. You say, "But how?" through the Word of God. The Word is the cleansing agent. Jesus said,

Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken
unto you. (John 15:3)

The Word does not simply shut the lid so those thoughts cannot get out. The Word flows through your life and reaches into the corners of your heart, and little by little, it cleanses and changes, until the choices become natural. The options become exciting. You don't want to lie. You don't want to gossip. You don't want to judge. You don't want to murmur. But while the process goes on, the procedure goes into effect. As God changes your heart, while God changes your heart, you can already have tamed your tongue, simply by choosing to do so. The growth takes years, but the choices take but an instant. So you can begin closing valves today, and the world will notice the difference.

Now if you were to see a blow-up of that Old You that keeps feeding bad behavior to your tongue, you would see that at least four satanic spirits are responsible for those sins of the tongue. The sins are but the fruits of those spirits. And while your first job is to close the gate or the valve, your second is to pinpoint those spirits and begin applying the cleansing Word to where

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

they reside.

I believe the 13 sins of the tongue we will find in Proverbs are the fruits of 4 basic spirits of satanic behavior. And I believe in Philippians 4:8, God has given us a cure for all four. There Paul wrote these words,

Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, If there be any virtue if there be any praise think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

God's short-term answer is to close the gate, and shut the valve of the tongue, but God's long-range answer is to change the patterns of our thoughts. See if this little chart might help. It lists the 4 sources of our old thought patterns, the 13 sins of the tongue those thoughts produce, and the thoughts with which the Spirit of God plans to replace those old thoughts that haunt us so!

The Source: The Spirit	The Fruits	He Cure: Think on these things
1- A hostile or negative spirit	Arguing, bad report, murmuring, or <u>complaining</u>	Whatsoever things are of good report (if there be any praise)
2- A proud or insensitive spirit	Boasting, judging, sarcasm	Whatsoever things are lovely
3- A destructive or deceitful spirit	Gossip, lying, meddling, flattery, nagging	Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, if there be any virtue,
4- An unholy or blaspheming spirit	Blasphemy, impure <u>conversation</u>	Whatsoever things are pure

First, there is a hostile or negative Spirit. It may be borne of rejection or trauma, of grief or of persecution. Left to itself, it will bombard the gates of the tongue with a desire to argue (to prove yourself right), or give a bad report (to prove yourself important), or to murmur or complain (to prove yourself wronged). But God has a cure for a hostile, negative spirit. He says,

Whatsoever things are of good report (that is, positive,

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

helpful, attractive), if there be any praise (anything praiseworthy), think on these things (retrain your thoughts and your tongue will follow suit).

Second, there's a proud or insensitive spirit. It may be borne of insecurity, or neglect, or unfavorable comparisons; but it produces a tongue that's filled with boasting (elevating self), with judging (putting down others overtly), and with sarcasm (putting down others subtly). But God has a cure for that proud, insensitive spirit, too. He says,

Whatsoever things are lovely (that is, loveable, appealing), think on these things.

You see,

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy—(works no ill to its neighbor, it won't judge.) (I Corinthians 13:4a NIV)

It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, (I Corinthians 13:4b)

It does not behave itself unseemly, (It won't be sarcastic.) seeketh not her own (it won't boast), (I Corinthians 13:5)

That's God's Solution:

...think on these things! (Philippians 4:8)

Third, there's a destructive or deceitful spirit. It longs to interfere, if necessary, in another's life, destroy, if necessary, another's reputation to satisfy its lust to have its way. The fruits of such a spirit include gossiping, lying, meddling, flattery, and nagging. God has a cure for that, too. He says,

Whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are honest, if there be any virtue, ...think on these things.

(Philippians 4:8)

Fourth, there resides within many the remains of an unholy or blaspheming spirit. Left to itself, it feeds the tongue seeds of impurity, profanity, and blasphemy. But God has a cure once again. He says,

Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are pure think on these things.

As we put into practice God's two-fold cure for the sins of the tongue, we begin by pinpointing the transgressions most common to us. We will usually find that they are traceable to a common spirit. Those who have problems, for instance, with gossiping are often plagued with a propensity to meddle, flatter, nag, or lie to draw attention to themselves at the expense of

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

others. All are fruits of a destructive or deceitful spirit. And often all are manifest in the same life. Once you've located the root spirit that plagues you, you search out the CAUSE of its roots in your life and begin meditating and applying those positive passages of Scripture that ultimately heal the wounds that spirit leaves.

Begin with Philippians 4:8 and the appropriate portion of that passage. But while you are treating the disease, you deal with the symptoms. You stop its contagious epidemic. You shut your mouth. Restrain your tongue. You bring under control what you say and how and when you say it.

During these next few lessons, we'll take a look at these four categories of evil and the thirteen sins of the tongue they produce, and hopefully in the process, we will begin to build a platform based on Philippians 4:8 for a healthy mind to feed a healthy tongue. Meanwhile, let's agree together that even while we're retraining our thoughts, we'll immediately begin to tame our tongues and at least stop setting fires wherever we go.

In this lesson, we will begin looking at the first segment of our study of the tongue—those sins that spring from a hostile or negative spirit. There are three of them.

- 1- An Argumentative Tongue (One that has to be right.)
- 2- A Murmuring or Complaining Tongue (One that's never satisfied.)
- 3- A Tongue that Thrives on Bad Reports (One that loves to accentuate the negative, eliminate the positive, and clobber anyone who comes between.)

Symptomatically, they are all very different, but at the root of all three lie that same spirit of hostility and that same spirit of bitterness that views life from the basement and sees life through mud-colored glasses that never thinks it quite gets a fair deal. It's always complaining, thriving on what's wrong, and arguing with anyone and everyone to prove it's right. And that argumentative tongue is, of course, the first hurdle in our Olympic event called "Taming the Tongue".

Now I don't know if you're an arguer or not, but if you are, go on notice that there's a reason no one wants you over for dinner. You make them feel uncomfortable. You can turn a pleasant conversation into a heated debate. And always you're the only

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

real expert in the room. You're viewed by your friends as a 10 cents lawyer whose only client is yourself—whose only goal is to win your case. Your mouth goes in high gear when your brain's in reverse, and everybody knows it but you. And the less sure you are of yourself, the louder you get hoping the sheer volume of your argument will overshadow its lack of substance. Even your children avoid you like the plague because there seldom is heard an encouraging word (and the skies are just cloudy all day.) Religion and politics light up your life because both are controversial and neither are conclusive. But why do you argue so? I believe most people argue for one of four reasons.

1- To prove a point - In other words, the issue becomes more important to you than people, so you will go to any lengths to prove your point.

2- To be important - Arguing elevates the ego. It makes you an expert; it turns life's spotlights on you.

3- To put down another person - This is called verbal murder. You argue an issue to destroy the credibility of a person, and whatever makes them smaller makes you bigger.

4- To cover up their insecurity - A moving mouth becomes a smokescreen to protect its owner from vulnerability to the real issues of life. So when someone gets too close or begins to know too much, you start an argument. It takes the heat off your needs and wraps you in a blanket of false security. Regardless of why you are overcome by an arguing spirit, you must recognize, at least, that you are and place a guard on your lips and stop setting fires you cannot put out.

The Bible is clear. An arguing tongue is a flame of fire. It spews sparks of hostility that land in the dry grass of the Christian Community and spread like wildfire until the whole forest of your world is needlessly ablaze. Let's see what the Scripture has to say about arguing, and first at what Proverbs, in particular, has to say. We'll read most of them paraphrased.

First of all, Proverbs tells us that pride feeds an arguing spirit.

Pride leads to arguments, be humble; take advice and become wise.
(Proverbs 13:10)

(Humility and arguing are not compatible. That in itself is primary.)

Second, Proverbs tells us that arguing is not only needless,

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

but also senseless.

To quarrel with one's neighbor is foolish; A man with good sense holds his tongue. (Proverbs 11:12 TLB)

(In other words, on a productivity scale of 1 to 10, an arguer is a minus one).

Third, Proverbs tells us that only a fool would do such a thing, and he's asking for trouble.

A fool's lips enter into contention His mouth calleth for strokes. (Proverbs 18:6 TLB)

Paraphrased,

A fool gets into constant fights. His mouth is his undoing. His words cry out for punishment.

Fourth- according to Proverbs, a simple argument is likely to end up in full-scale warfare.

It's hard to stop a quarrel once it starts, so don't let it begin. (Proverbs 17:14 TLB)

It's like a dam that bursts and floods the land. (Proverbs 17:14 paraphrased)

(It may seem so insignificant, but those tiny sparks set great fires and destroy great lives.)

Fifth- Proverbs goes on, the key to ending arguments is getting rid of the arguer (and that could be you.)

Cast out the scorner and contention shall go out. Yea, strife and reproach shall cease. (Proverbs 22:10)

As coals are to burning coals and wood is to a fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. (Proverbs 26:21)

Sixth- We learn from Proverbs that arguing separates friends; and healing is difficult.

It is harder to win back the friendship of an offended brother than to capture a fortified city. His anger shuts out like iron bars. (Proverbs 18:19)

Seventh- Alcohol is a catalyst that provokes an arguing spirit.

Who is it that is always fighting and quarreling? It is the one who spends long hours at taverns trying out new mixtures. (Proverbs 23:29)

Eighth- An arguing woman is like a drippy faucet. She gets on your nerves. (Of course, the same holds true for a man.)

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

A constant dripping on a rainy day and a cranky woman are much alike. You can no more stop her complaints than you can stop the wind or hold onto anything with oil-slick hands. (Proverbs 27:15)

It's better to live in the desert than with a quarrelsome, complaining woman. (Proverbs 21:19)

Ninth- Our next pearl from Proverbs on arguing in this: God is unimpressed just because we prove our point.

We can always “prove” we are right but is the Lord convinced? (Memorize that passage.) (Proverbs 16:2)

Tenth- Even riches and prosperity don't make living with an arguer pleasant.

A dry crust eaten in peace is better than steak every day along with argument and strife. (Proverbs 17:1)

Eleventh- Proverbs says, don't honor an arguer by stooping to his level. Humor him instead.

When arguing with a rebel, don't use foolish arguments as he does. Prick his conscience with silly replies. (Proverbs 26:4,5)

There's no use arguing with a fool. He only rages and scoffs and tempers flare. (Proverbs 29:9)

Well, you must admit Proverbs is practical, and it practically puts the arguer in his place. It says arguing is a senseless pastime enjoyed only by fools who are prompted by pride. Furthermore, it says a simple argument has all the ingredients of destruction. The only way to be sure you avoid such contention, it adds, is to avoid the contentious—the one who loves to argue—because arguing separates friends and often for good, and alcohol only makes it worse. It kindles a satanic flame of contention. How boring it is to live with an arguer. Drip, Drip, Drip, they go. How you wish they'd go away.

You see, we can win the battle and lose the war. God is not impressed when we do. That's why it's easier to live on beans in peace than in plenty with an arguer. So if you have a perpetual arguer on your hands, don't honor him by arguing. Humor him instead. SO SAYS PROVERBS ABOUT AN ARGUING TONGUE.

Now, I know you don't want to fall into that category, and neither do I; but isn't it strange how we listen to the “Voice of That Stranger”, and we argue over the most inconsequential

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

things? And so often, even when we win, we lose. It isn't that we aren't on occasions called on to defend truth; but that vicious, contentious spirit that demands to be heard, that puts down the other guy, that elevates the issue above the person, God hates that. The New Testament adds some icing to the cake to further highlight God's attitudes on arguing and then specifically deals with the problem of Christians arguing among themselves. Again, paraphrased, listen to Paul:

In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you.
(Philippians 2:14,15a TLB)

Paul tells Timothy to avoid needless arguments.

Remind your people of these great facts, and command them in the name of the Lord not to argue over unimportant things. Such arguments are confusing and useless, and even harmful.

Again I say, don't get involved in foolish arguments which only upset people and make them angry.

(II Timothy 2:14,23 TLB)

(In verse 24 he deals with rebuke and arguing.)

God's people must not be quarrelsome; they must be gentle, patient, teachers of those who are wrong.

Be humble when you are trying to teach those who are mixed up concerning the truth. For if you talk meekly and courteously to them they are more likely, with God's help, to turn away from their wrong ideas and believe what is true.

(II Timothy 2:24,25 TLB)

Then Paul gives Tim an alternative:

Don't waste your time arguing over foolish ideas and silly myths and legends. (Instead) Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit. (I Timothy 4:7 TLB)

Again he reminds us that needless arguments over unprovable theology are unproductive. He says,

Don't get involved in arguing over unanswerable questions and controversial theological ideas; keep out of arguments and quarrels about obedience to Jewish laws (for example), for this kind of thing isn't worthwhile; it only does harm

(Titus 3:9 TLB)

And oh, how Paul condemns arguing over denominational superiority.

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

But, dear brothers, I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so that there won't be splits in the Church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.

For some of those who live at Chloe's house have told me of your arguments and quarrels, dear brothers.

Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others say they are for Apollos or Peter, and some that they alone are the true followers of Christ. And so, in effect, you have broken Christ into many pieces.

For it is from God alone that you have your life through Christ Jesus.

And as it says in the Scriptures, "If anyone is going to boast, let him boast only of what the Lord has done."

(I Corinthians 1:10-12,30a,31 TLB)

He wraps it all in one package and ties it with a ribbon of love in:

As I requested of you when on my way to Macedonia, stay in Ephesus so that you may warn certain people not to teach any other doctrine.

Neither to pay attention to legends and interminable genealogies such as cause disputes rather than divine training that is in faith.

The purpose of our instruction however is love (the kind of love) that rises out of a pure heart, a clear conscience, and undisguised faith.

Swerving from this, some have strayed into empty talk (making confident assertions but lacking understanding.)

(I Timothy 1:3-6 paraphrase)

The problem is certainly not a new one, and Satan loves to pit Christian against Christian, denomination against denomination, group against group, seminary against seminary; majoring on minors, setting up tin idols of unimportant doctrines that cannot be proved, all the while overshadowing the common bond of Calvary and our common call to reach a dying world.

So we argue over issues, and men and women who are lost and bound for an eternity in hell miss the message of the love of God because we're too busy making idols of our eschatology, or our mode of baptism, or our interpretation of the role of women in the church, or of tithing, or the kind of music we think is appropriate. Paul said, "Grow up Christians." The

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

important thing is that you demonstrate love from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and an undisguised faith. You don't need to compromise your differences. You just don't need to major on them.

What we have in common is JESUS, and what men are looking for is JESUS. If you had a patent on a medicine that could cure cancer, would you waste your time arguing over the shape of the bottle? or the size of the label? or the color of the pill? I hope not. But we destroy churches and homes and relationships needlessly through unnecessary arguments when we've got the cure. What a number Satan has done on us!

If you're an arguer, if you'd rather "fight than switch," if you find yourself more interested in issues than people, in theology than reality, may I suggest the following set of guidelines to put a stop to your flame-throwing tongue that loves to argue.

1- When you begin to argue, ask yourself, "Is this discussion eternally significant? Does eternity hang in the balance? Will a man's soul be won or lost by how the football strike turns out? Is your neighbor likely to meet Jesus because you harassed him to vote for your candidate? Is What TV program is the worst? a discussion likely to lead to conversion?" Ask yourself, "Is this discussion eternally significant?"

2- Ask yourself continually, "Am I alienating a person in order to prove a point?" God's in the people business, He's not a debater. First, He reaches for their hearts. That's why Paul was willing to be a Jew to the Jews, a Greek to the Greeks, so that he might by some means win some. Who cares if you're right if you lose the person?

You may remember the story of the time a Christian leader had moved into a new house, and he always liked to keep the string and tape and paper he used to mail packages together in one place, and he made a major issue out of it. One day he went down into the basement to wrap a package and the tape was there, and the paper was there, but not the string. In a fit of rage, he stormed up the stairs, flew into the kitchen and confronted his wife. "You borrowed my string," he bellowed, "And the string belongs in the basement. THIS TIME I KNOW I'M RIGHT." He said his wise wife looked directly at him through innocent eyes and calmly replied, "Honey, you can be right all the time." He said, suddenly his heart began to sink. He had made an eternal

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

issue of a ball of string, and risked offending the dearest person in his life—to prove that he was right.

What his wife was saying, and what I believe God is saying to many of us is, “You can *be* right but be wrong in the process.” If to win your case you lose your cool or your testimony or the respect of one you love, what good have you done? In the light of eternity, what is more important? A ball of string or your wife’s respect? And have you never misplaced anything yourself?

Just what does it take for you to start an argument? A customer who demands something he doesn’t deserve? What’s more important? To prove him wrong or to demonstrate God’s patience? What provokes you to argue? The likes of a referee’s call? What’s more important? To win the game or demonstrate God’s grace? What sets your tongue on fire? When the storekeeper fails to give you the right change? What’s more important, thirty-six cents or demonstrating God’s mercy?

Ask yourself, “Is it eternally significant? And am I sacrificing a real live person on the altar of an issue?” If you ask those two questions, many an arguing tongue will grow silent. You want to know what your children think is of eternal value? The things you argue about. Do you know how your children visualize marriage? The way they see yours! What do they see? Constant arguing? Endless fights? They hear you. (They have elephant ears.) They see you on Sunday speaking peace on earth good will to men, but they hear you at home fighting again and again, and they can’t make the connection.

3- Ask, “What is my motivation for arguing?” Is it to win my point? to prove I’m right? to prove they’re wrong? to cover my insecurity? My friend, when you are secure in Christ, you have nothing to prove! You have no need to exalt yourself, no desire to put down another. Test your motivation. Then cease your arguing.

4- Make sure you do not argue with non-Christians over Scriptural principles.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:14)

I see so much harm done right here! You don’t argue with an unbeliever over God’s position on divorce or submission

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

to authority or alcohol or work ethics or marriage principles or finances You will only alienate them by setting standards they have no power to reach. Don't argue principles. Instead, introduce them to Jesus. When His Spirit comes into their lives, then they can understand the principles and obey them.

5- Don't argue with new Christians over strong doctrine. They're babies. They don't have teeth yet. You can't stick a steak in their mouths and expect them to chew. Feed them the milk of the basics first. Let them grow up into Christ, then adjust their diets as they grow. Too much too soon and you may strangle them, particularly if you are 'arguing' your case rather than demonstrating His life.

6- Don't try to argue someone into submission. Paul said, "Pastors, you lead your flocks not by constraint but willingly." He said, "Husbands, you love your wives." You don't lord it over them. Earn their respect. The submission will follow. So many Christians use their roles as clubs to argue their importance. God never clubs us into submission. He simply shows Himself to be worthy, and submission becomes a by-product of respect.

7- And lastly, beware of vulnerability arguments. Vulnerability arguments are when you expose another's weakness in order to prove your point. It's a deadly game. For example, you exclaim, "Phone prices have just gone out of sight. Of course, I know because my wife talks on the phone so much." Or, "We sure need to watch what we say don't we? I can never forget how you offended Mary last week."

You see, under the guise of making a point you destroy another's character or put them down. That's just not God's way. Don't do it. God's way is to build up and to speak peace.

I know the thoughts I think toward you, saith the Lord;
thoughts of peace and not of evil; thoughts to prosper you;
not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.

(Jeremiah 29:11)

That's the way God thinks. He brings peace to angry hearts. He brings peace to troubled homes. He brings peace to wounded friendships. He says,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:

(John 14:27a)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the
children of God.

(Matthew 5:9)

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

Ask yourself, then, does your tongue bring peace? Or is it always churning up strife? When you walk into a room do people relax, knowing your presence and your tongue will speak peace to their hearts? Or does everyone get on edge at the mention of your name? Do people avoid you to avoid an argument? Or do they come to you to help settle their hearts? Ask yourself, “Do I have an arguing tongue?” If you say, “Yes,” then tell yourself, “That’s not God’s way!”

Well, so much for the issue of arguing. It elevates self, wounds others, and breaks the heart of God. The process is to trace the spirit that causes us to argue and root it out, replacing it with the cleansing power of the Word of God. That’s our long-range goal, to do away with the hostility and the insecurity that makes us argue.

That will take time, and we must begin, but we don’t wait till then to stop arguing. We choose to stop arguing today. And when that hostile or argumentative thought reaches the tips of our tongues, we just don’t let it pass. We choose to reject it in Jesus’ name and free the mind of Christ in us to speak peace instead, and the Prince of Peace will be glorified in the process. The sparks of an arguing tongue—They need not fly from our lips anymore.

(See poem on next page)

The Sparks of an Arguing Tongue

THE SPARKS OF AN ARGUING TONGUE

Oh, the sparks of an arguing tongue
With vengeance do they fly
And lives and homes are set afire
And we but wonder why.

So out to prove our point are we
And get men on our side
We'll wound the tender heart of one
For whom our Savior died.

We'll argue with our families
We'll argue with our friends
Forgetting if we win, we lose
The hurting never ends...

Oh, the sparks of an arguing tongue
They set fires again and again
Oh, teach us Lord to speak peace instead
That we may speak Jesus to men!!!

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(01.11.12)