

# Speak the truth in love

By Stephanie Kardia



## Psalm 39:1–3

*I said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence. But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased. My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue.”*

I did it again — and I have the sore tongue to prove it! During lunch yesterday, my seemingly-too-big-for-my-mouth tongue forgot to get out of the way of my all-too-quick-to-chomp teeth, and now I am in possession of a tender and painful reminder of my “slip of the tongue.”

Similarly, when I “bite my tongue” instead of speaking my mind, I often feel frustrated and hurt days later. Holding back what I really want to say hurts — and keeps hurting — until my bottled-up feelings finally pour out. By then the words and feelings are all mixed up with regret for holding back and frustration with myself for not calmly taking a breath the moment someone says or does something that offends me, looking that person in the eye, and speaking the truth in love with confidence.

Instead I bite my tongue. I’m afraid of my tongue. It is difficult to control and gets me into trouble. *It is a restless evil* (James 3:6–10). But I often hold my tongue for another reason: I’m afraid of saying what I want to say because I’m afraid that the person — he or she — won’t listen to me or worse, will be angry that I spoke up.

Nevertheless, the Lord would have me *speak the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15). The Lord would have me speak truthfully to my neighbor (Zechariah 8:16), not let the sun go down while I am still angry (Ephesians 4:26), and *win my brother over* (Matthew 18:15).

What this means is that in a very loving and kind way — without raising my voice in anger or sarcasm, with complete humility, and with willingness to receive criticism — I should speak.

My confidence to do this can only come from Jesus, the one who in love gave Himself to pay for all my sin, including my slips of the tongue. He has promised to give me the words to say through the Holy Spirit, even in the presence of someone who has great authority over me (Luke 12:11–12).

The Father who loves me desires through me to love others as well. He encourages me to encourage others. And so I’ll untie my tongue, relax, and speak the truth in love!