



MONDAY MANNA
September 28, 2026

WHEN TO SPEAK – AND WHEN TO REMAIN SILENT

By Robert J. Tamasy

A quote on a professional social networking platform recently caught my eye. It read like this:

*"My parents told me if I swallowed bubblegum, it would stay in my stomach for seven years.
My teacher told me if I accidentally ate a watermelon seed, a plant would grow inside me.
No one, however, told me that if I swallowed back the words I needed to say, they would linger far
longer than seven years, and grow far wilder than any plant."*

What does that say to you? I understand it to mean that if I have something on my mind, something that is bothering me, it would be best to express it than to keep the words internalized, unspoken. I am not sure I agree with that – at least not always.

There are times when it is legitimate – even advisable – to voice what we are thinking, whether it is a complaint, a concern, an opinion, something that has angered us, or a matter on which we disagree. There are benefits to speaking our minds, especially if what we have to say can contribute to greater understanding or present a different perspective.

However, there are other times when our thoughts are best unsaid – especially if expressed out of anger, without weighing the possible negative impact of our words. Stating our thoughts and feelings aloud might make us feel better, but they can also cause a lot of damage. *"...the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.... The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire..."* (James 3:5-6).

Which is it? Should we express what we genuinely think and feel, or should we refrain from speaking, fearing possible damage it could create? The answer to this is simple: It depends – on the circumstances, and what is being said. Here are some principles for evaluating what we say and how we say it:

Use our words economically. When it comes to words, sometimes the less said the better. The more we say, the more likely we are to express something we might regret. *"When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise"* (Proverbs 10:19). *"Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue"* (Proverbs 17:28).

Speak when we can benefit others. Our words can be powerful tools for good when used wisely and in a timely manner. *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen"* (Ephesians 4:29). *"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones"* (Proverbs 16:24).

Express our thoughts with caution, and not in haste. Some people have a tendency to speak before thinking or first weighing the impact of what they are saying. *"He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin"* (Proverbs 13:3). *"My beloved brothers, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger"* (James 1:19).

Voice ideas that have been carefully considered. Speaking impulsively can be a bad habit. Once words are said, we cannot press an "Undo" button as we can on the computer. *"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"* (Proverbs 12:18). *"A man of knowledge restrains his words, and a man of understanding maintains a calm spirit"* (Proverbs 17:27).

© 2026. Robert J. Tamasy has written Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship; Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart, *coauthored with Ken Johnson*; and The Heart of Mentoring, *coauthored with David A. Stoddard*, and numerous other books and magazine articles. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Think of a time when you decided not to say something that you later realized should have been said? Why do you think it should have been expressed – and why didn't you say it?
2. Think of another time when you did say what was on your mind, but then regretted it – perhaps even immediately? What was the impact of what you said that should have been kept silent?
3. We live in a world filled with words, with people tending to say whatever is on their minds, whenever they choose to do so – whether on the news or talk shows, at political rallies, in public settings, in business meetings, or in the home. What are the consequences of what we might call “unbridled speech”?
4. Why do you think spoken words have such power – both for good and for evil? What do you think of the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 12:18; Matthew 12:36-37; Colossians 3:8, 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 1:26,30

Challenge for This Week

What kind of verbal communicator are you? One who is quick to speak your mind, or one that weighs words before speaking them?

This week try to meet with someone you trust and discuss this. Perhaps you might invite prayers that you can use more discretion in what you say. Or you might have a friend or colleague who could benefit from some constructive criticism regarding their speech.