

# Keeping Lips from Slips

Many great men and women down through the ages have offered counsel on how to keep our tongues checked and caged. Like Will Noris, an American journalist who specialized in rhymes that packed a wallop. He once wrote:

*If your lips would keep from slips ... Five things observe with care ... To whom you speak, of whom you speak ... And how, and when, and where.*

Publius, the Greek sage, put his finger on another technique we tend to forget when he admitted: "I have often regretted my speech, never my silence."

King David put it even more bluntly in Psalm 39:1 – "I said, 'I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle.'"



That's what it takes. A conscious, tight muzzle on the muscle in the mouth. With emphasis on *conscious*.

Charles Swindoll, pastor, author and radio preacher, in his book *The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece*, offers three suggestions for bridling the tongue:

1. "**Think first.** Before your lips start moving, pause 10 seconds and mentally preview your words. Are they accurate or exaggerated? Kind or cutting? Necessary or needless? Wholesome or vile? Grateful or complaining?"
2. "**Talk less.** You increase your chances of blowing it if you talk too much. Furthermore, compulsive talkers find it difficult to keep friends. Conserve your verbal energy! Make your words like good shampoo: concentrated and rich.
3. "**Start today.** You've read enough already to help you bring your tongue into submission. Fit that muzzle on your mouth *now*. It's a project you've put off long enough."

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, the brilliant German poet and playwright, stated a practical guideline worth remembering:

"One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words."

– Beecher Hunter