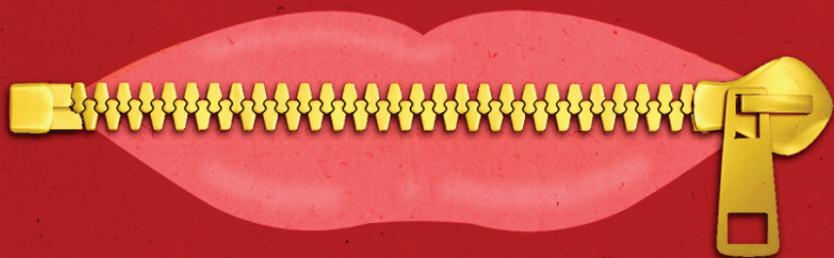


ZIP IT



THE KEEP IT SHUT
40-DAY CHALLENGE

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Zip It

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1

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH



Lesson for the Lips

Think back over your life. Does a phrase either spoken directly to you or said about you still echo in your mind today? Perhaps it was encouraging and brought life. Or maybe it was critical, caustic, or cutting and has stuck with you over the years, leaving an ache in your heart or pain in your soul. What words have stuck with you over the years? How does thinking about their lasting impact shape your perspective on how you use your own words with others today?

2

THE GREAT KNOW-IT-ALL



Lesson for the Lips

Today, let's not focus on our words so much but rather on our thought life. How would you rate your thinking on the following scale?

- 1—I often have less-than-lovely thoughts about others and even plot to do evil.
- 2—I occasionally have less-than-lovely thoughts about others and only sometimes plan to do wrong.
- 3—My thought life is a pretty even mix of good and evil.
- 4—Most of the time my thoughts are uplifting and godly and only occasionally do I struggle with keeping them in line.
- 5—I really don't have trouble keeping my thoughts in alignment with Scripture.

Now, to help keep your thought life in order, choose one of the verses mentioned here and try to memorize it this week. Write it on a sticky note and post it in a prominent place where you will see it often. Or type it out on your cell phone and make it your lock screen. Continue mentally rehearsing it, and even saying it out loud, until you memorize it. Then, in the future, when your thoughts want to migrate to a place where they will not be pleasing to God, quote the verse out loud.

- Psalm 139:4: “Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.”
- Philippians 4:8: “Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

3

SHUTTING DOWN THE MOTORMOUTH



Lesson for the Lips

Let's talk quantity. Circle the phrase below that most closely describes you when it comes to how often you talk in social situations or interactions in your relationships:

- I am relatively quiet most of the time, usually speaking less than others in a group setting and rarely voicing my opinion.
- I am quiet sometimes, especially with people I don't know, but other times I talk a great deal in a group setting and offer my opinion when directly asked.
- I talk about as much as the average person, giving my opinions without dominating conversations.
- I am considered by most to be a chatterbox, talking

more than others in almost every social situation
and freely giving my opinion.

Based on the description you circled, would you like to
make any changes? Do you need to make an adjustment in
how often you speak? If so, what? Write out a sentence or two
with your goal in this area.

4

ON CHERRY SLUSHIES AND REFRESHING SPRINGS



Lesson for the Lips

Let's take the "Praise Over Put-Downs" challenge. In your interactions with others today—whether at home, work, or in your community—seek to utter words of praise and refrain from pronouncing any put-downs. Go out of your way to praise others for the qualities and characteristics you see and appreciate in them. Do not condemn but celebrate. Make it your aim for only praise to stream out of your mouth, and see if it isn't even sweeter and more refreshing than a cherry slushy on a hot summer day!

5

WEIGHT CONTROL



Lesson for the Lips

What percent of the time would you say you carefully weigh your words before speaking? Is it closer to 100 percent of the time or closer to . . . well . . . never? Be honest. Write the percentage below.

What are some questions you can learn to ask yourself before giving an answer to someone? Can you think of any helpful phrases to keep in mind that will help you weigh your words? If so, jot them down here:

6

SLEEP TALKING AND DAYTIME WORDS



Lesson for the Lips

Start with Philippians 4:8. This verse is abundantly clear on exactly what should be in our minds, so keep coming back to it to weigh your thoughts and words. In the space below, write Philippians 4:8 as a reminder of what to do for the rest of today. Then circle all the words that tell us what kinds of thoughts we are to have.

7

YOUR HEART THOUGHTS ARE LOUDER THAN YOU REALIZE



Lesson for the Lips

Ask God to make you aware of the conversations you have with yourself. I could probably make it a long time without evaluating what I'm actually talking to myself about. What about you? What kinds of conversations do you have with yourself? Write down the unspoken words you tend to repeat to yourself. Then look up one of God's promises that will reorient your unspoken conversation toward something Jesus would find to be sweet. It might look something like this:

- Heart thought: "Ugh, I am so not looking forward to today."
- God thought: "This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24 NKJV).

8

MOUTH-SHUT PRAYERS



Lesson for the Lips

How about we put this idea into practice right now? Write out a prayer below. I'll start, you'll go next, and we'll wait for Jesus to finish. Instead of wrapping up our prayer with our usual closing, I'll leave the prayer open-ended. You can sit for just a few minutes to see how Jesus might finish the prayer.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for this unique lesson from Genesis 24. We have a prayer closet we can take anywhere and use at any time. Remind me that I can always pause and say a silent prayer in my heart closet. Let me trust you, just as this servant trusted you, especially when it comes to the situation most heavy on my heart today. You know what I need to pray. I'll listen and watch as you finish this prayer . . .

9

BUILDING YOUR WORD-ROBE



Lesson for the Lips

Pinning outfits on Pinterest has become an entertaining pastime for many women. There's just something special about putting together the perfect outfit. Consider the perfect combination of promises you'd like to wear today. Draw something creative below or just write a few beautiful, simple truths about God you'd like to clasp around your wrist, fasten to your ear, or wrap softly around your neck.

10

THIS CONVERSATION TOOK A TURN



Lesson for the Lips

The next time you're in a conversation that seems dry, stay a little longer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. You may be afforded the opportunity to speak some Scripture. You may have the opportunity to listen a little longer. Either way, may God guide you.

11

R-E-S-P-E-C-T



Lesson for the Lips

Can you name someone in your life who speaks respectfully a majority of the time? What stands out the most to you about how that person uses his or her words?

Do you know someone you have a hard time speaking to respectfully? Why do you think you have trouble showing that person respect with your speech?

Challenge: Think about the person you just named. It's been said if we look hard enough, we can find a good quality in anyone. So name one good quality about this person. Take your time . . . you'll eventually find something. Write it here:

Okay . . . *deep breath* . . . reach out to that person with your words this week—either spoken, written, texted, or

typed—and say you admire that quality in them. Do not expect a response. Do it only to show love and display respect. As you do, think about this verse: Romans 12:10, “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other” (NLT).

12

THAT TIME I SPIED UGLY IN THE MIRROR



Lesson for the Lips

Ask yourself, “Who could hold me accountable in the area of speaking respectfully?” Choose someone who will be honest with you and cares enough about you to tell you the truth and point you to God. Contact that person to see if he or she is willing to check in with you periodically to inquire how you are doing.

For the married, brave at heart parent only: Ask your children to be honest with you. Question them about what they observe when you speak to your spouse. Is there anything they think you should clean up? What grade would they give you when it comes to how you treat your husband? Tell them you’re trying to obey the Bible by respecting and honoring him, and you just need a little report card from them to know how you are doing and to enable you to make the necessary changes.

Meditate on this verse today to help you in your quest to speak with honor to others: “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” (Eph. 4:29).

13

WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO CROSS THE LINE



Lesson for the Lips

Have you been cutting it a bit too close to the line in an area of your speech? Have your words bordered on gossip? Has your speech painted your spouse in a negative light, if even in a humorous and kidding way? Has your tone been disrespectful to your boss or coworker? Take a moment to ponder this in prayer. Then write down any area that comes to mind.

How can the story of my cutting it too close to the line while driving help you resist the temptation to sin with your words today? What practical actions can keep you from coming too close to crossing the line of sin in your life? Try to commit one of the following verses to memory to help in your quest to not give in to temptation:

- 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God

is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

- Psalm 119:10–11 (AMPC): “With my whole heart have I sought You, inquiring for and of You and yearning for You; Oh, let me not wander or step aside [either in ignorance or willfully] from Your commandments. Your word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

14

WHEN FACEBOOK MAKES YOU FEISTY



Lesson for the Lips

Have you ever found yourself jealous when you saw something on social media? Have those feelings of jealousy led to combativeness or quarreling? If so, how?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank yourself when it comes to online quarrels you see in comment threads or on Twitter or Facebook feeds? Let's say the number 1 represents "I never participate in online quarrels" and 10 stands for "I love a good online fight and often jump in and give my opinion." Be honest. Write the number below.

How would you like to see that number change? What can you do to bring about that change? Write a goal for yourself in this area.

15

FOLLOWING FROM AFAR



Lesson for the Lips

Ponder—and perhaps even memorize—one of the following portions of Scripture to help you speak up for Christ without fear:

- 1 Peter 3:14–16: “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”
- Psalm 40:8–10: “I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart. I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips,

LORD, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.”

16

ONE-BULLET BARNEY



Lesson for the Lips

James 1:19 reads, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (ESV).

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being “almost never” and 10 being “practically always”), how often do you ponder what you will say before you open your mouth? Record that number here in the space provided.

If you would like to see that number change for the better, what is one action step you could take today to make it happen?

17

A SPRINKLE OF SALT



Lesson for the Lips

Colossians 4:6 mentions salty speech directly in reference to knowing “how to answer everyone.” Can you think of a time when you gave an answer to someone and it did not go well? Briefly describe it here in the space provided:

Now look back over the list of salt’s various uses. Which one could you have employed to change how you gave your answer for the better? If you could go back in time, how would you answer differently based on that particular quality of salt?

18

LACED WITH GRACE



Lesson for the Lips

How are you doing in the areas of being careful what you drink in and spending time early with the Son? Do you see a correlation between how much time you spend each day drinking in God's Word and how you use your words? Jot a few sentences here that describe your walk with God in this area currently.

Do you have any goals when it comes to spending focused time alone each day with Jesus? What's working? What needs changing? Is it a matter of putting it on your schedule? Of having a friend hold you accountable? Write a few declarative sentences stating what your goals are for spending unrushed time with God each day.

19

FROM FOOTHOLD TO STRONGHOLD



Lesson for the Lips

Think of a time when you did “let the sun go down on your anger.” What happened? How long was it until you dealt with your feelings and talked to the person you were upset with? Briefly describe it here:

Now, how could this situation have been handled differently? If you could revisit your actions and take an alternative path, what would you do instead?

Here is a phrase to keep in mind as you interact with others today who may do or say something that causes you to become livid: *attack the problem, not the person.*

Write out this phrase on a sticky note or note card or make it the screen saver on your phone or computer. Memorize it and repeat it back to yourself if you are tempted to lash out.

20

BUT YOU DON'T KNOW MY FAMILY



Lesson for the Lips

Do you encounter someone at family gatherings whose bad behavior sometimes tempts you to behave poorly in return? Can you think of a specific incident that happened in the past? Briefly describe that time here:

What is your normal tendency when it comes to responding to this person?

How can keeping in mind the instructions in Romans 12:18 help you to alter your behavior around him or her the next time you're together?

21

THE SNOWBALL OF SENSELESS SPEECH



Lesson for the Lips

Let's try another memory passage today. Write out Psalm 141:3–4, either on paper or electronically, and place it where you will see it often. It may help to set an alarm on your phone to remind you to read and recite the verse, committing it to memory. Then make it your earnest prayer.

*“Set a guard over my mouth, LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.
Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil
so that I take part in wicked deeds
along with those who are evildoers;
do not let me eat their delicacies.” (Ps.141:3–4)*

22

THE STING OF SEARING SARCASM



Lesson for the Lips

When it comes to the subjects of sarcasm and coarse jesting, which phrase below best describes you? Circle it.

- I never need to say, “I was only joking.”
- I rarely speak in a mocking or sarcastic tone.
- I probably use sarcasm or joking as much as the average person.
- I like to joke around with others, often being sarcastic when I do.
- I am the queen of sarcasm and often use it in my speech.

Can you trace any tense relationships to your sarcastic or inappropriately teasing behavior? How do the verses discussed in today's challenge speak to your behavior in this area? Any changes you desire to make? If so, write them out in a few sentences below.

Now, pick one of the verses for today and write it out in the space provided here. Perhaps seeing it printed in your own handwriting will help you to solidify its importance.

- Proverbs 1:22: “How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?”
- Proverbs 26:18–19: “Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death is one who deceives their neighbor and says, ‘I was only joking!’”
- Ephesians 5:4: “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”

- Ephesians 4:29: “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.”

23

JUST SAY THANKS



Lesson for the Lips

Think through your ordinary schedule this week. Where will you go? What service providers are you likely to encounter? Jot down one or two of them (even if you don't know their names) here and also on your calendar or in the notes app on your cell phone.

Brainstorm a few simple phrases you could say to each person to show your appreciation for what they do. Then make a point to push past awkward, follow through, and do it!

Write out the following verses in your own handwriting. Then let them serve as a goal for you as you seek to look and listen for ways to thank others.

- “Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5:16–18 HCSB)

24

HELP THEM HIT REFRESH



Lesson for the Lips

Has someone in your life used words that refreshed your soul? What did that person say to help you gain new perspective?

Select someone to whom you will speak words of encouragement today, helping to refresh them and renew their hope for the future. Write that person's name here:

Now jot down how you will do this. Will you make a phone call? Send a handwritten note in the mail? Speak it in person? Be sure to follow through on your intentions. Not only will you brighten that someone's day, but your heart will be refreshed as well.

25

TO TELL THE TRUTH



Lesson for the Lips

In what areas does the world have totally opposite standards from what is put forth in Scripture to be right and true? List a few below.

Using an online search or site such as BibleGateway, locate verses that show God's viewpoint on those issues. Write out the references below.

What are some guidelines to keep in mind when discussing what is true with those who believe differently from what the Bible teaches? Keep these guidelines in mind as you interact with such people in the future.

26

WHEN YOU *THINK* YOU KNOW WHY: IT'S TIME TO BE SILENT



Lesson for the Lips

Reflect on a time you said something without knowing all the details. Or reflect upon a time someone tried explaining your situation to you when they didn't know the full story. How did it feel? What was your response? Take some time to remember. Decide to choose silence if there is any chance of hurting someone else.

27

WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER: IT'S TIME TO BE SILENT



Lesson for the Lips

Whenever you're in a conversation and someone says, "Excuse me?" or "Can you repeat that?" it might be the Holy Spirit giving you a chance to think about whether you should repeat what you just said. We can also use this approach with others. If someone else says something offensive, give them another chance by asking them to repeat themselves. In so doing they might hear the Holy Spirit's voice urging them to refrain or reword. If you have a chance to try this today, do so and record the results here:

28

WHEN YOU CAN HELP (AND THERE'S NOTHING IN IT FOR YOU): IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP



Lesson for the Lips

When was the last time you felt the urge to speak up for the spiritually destitute, but didn't because of fear? Write down your memory.

Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of a promise from his Word to squelch this fear. If nothing comes to mind, do a simple Google search for “verses about courage from the Bible.” You’ll find some helpful links with some powerful Scriptures. Choose one and jot it down here:

29

WHEN ONLY GOD KNOWS WHAT JUST HAPPENED: IT'S TIME TO BE SILENT



Lesson for the Lips

Whenever I'm in a Bible study group, I love contributing. However, one time God told me to take a backseat. He told me to be a listener for the entire nine-week Bible study. It was hard. I wanted to jump in on almost every question. But I paused and watched as plenty of other people from the group added valuable content to the conversation. What if you decided to attend the next Bible study as a listener? I think you would be surprised by what you learned.

30

WHEN YOU KNOW THEY NEED TO KNOW: IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP



Lesson for the Lips

We can do only so much sitting back and silent witnessing. Think of just one person in your life who does not know the Lord. Pray. Bring his or her name before our Father. Today might not be the right time to share with them, but ask God to bring about an opportunity soon.

31

DO OR DIE: THE SWEET WORDS OF ABIGAIL



Lesson for the Lips

Consider this: the Bible says Abigail “made haste” to take her gift and go speak to David (1 Sam. 25:18 ESV). Do you think this was Abigail’s first time speaking sweetly in a precarious situation? We all need to practice speaking sweetly in the *little* trials so if a true do-or-die situation ever arises we will know what to say, how to say it, and whether to say nothing at all. Can you think of a small situation where you are currently being called to speak sweetly? Briefly describe it here:

By cultivating the habit of sweet speech in lesser situations, we will be better prepared to speak wisely in greater ones.

32

POURING SALT ON A WOUND: THE SALTY WORDS OF DAVID



Lesson for the Lips

Confess your sin. Right. Now. Really! First John 1:9 urges, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (ESV). Read Psalm 51. This is David’s earnest prayer of confession, and we can pray it right along with him. Or just pray verse 10, which begs, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (ESV). On a sheet of paper, pen a prayer of confession to God. Read it out loud to him. Then tear it up and toss it into the trash, knowing your sins are forgiven.

33

IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST: THE SWEET WORDS OF BOAZ



Lesson for the Lips

Look up Proverbs 15:28 and jot it down on a sticky note or note card. Then keep it in a place where you will see it before falling asleep at night. This will help you remember (as it does for me) that not every response needs to happen in the heat of the moment. Words can wait until morning. Decisions can wait until morning. Commitments can wait until they've been properly evaluated and prayed over.

34

KICKING IT UP A NOTCH: THE SALTY WORDS OF MORDECAI



Lesson for the Lips

Here is a verse to make into a screen saver for your phone, tablet, or computer: “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up” (Eph. 4:29 ESV). Salty encouragement is never mean-spirited or destructive. Whether our words are sweet or salty, the end result should work toward building each other up. I challenge you to give salty encouragement to others only in love, not in jealousy. In person. Online. And on the phone. Salt is strong; use it wisely and sparingly!

35

SOUL FOOD: THE SWEET AND SALTY WORDS OF JESUS



Lesson for the Lips

Invite Jesus into your life today. Maybe you have acknowledged that he died on the cross for your sins and maybe you are living in this forgiveness and grace, but do you consistently taste the sweet and salty words of Jesus? Did you consume his Word today? What if you read the Bible at one meal each day? Read a few verses. Think about them. Eat some delicious food and see if you enjoy having Jesus over for breakfast, lunch, or dinner!

36

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US HOW TO RESPOND WITH FORGIVENESS



Lesson for the Lips

Simply remember “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” and let it be a phrase that stays in your mind and on your lips.

You know those cute pictures with inspirational phrases all over social media? Make your own artwork below. If you aren't much for drawing, then simply write the phrase. But if you'd like, creatively use some colored pencils or markers to write “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” in the space provided.

37

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US HOW TO RESPOND IN PRAYER



Lesson for the Lips

Write down one thing you would like to be persistent about in prayer today. Ask God to give you passion. Every time you think about this thing, shoot up a prayer. Try for all of today and tonight to pray about it from different angles. See what God might teach you about persistence. What is the one persistent prayer you have today? Record it here:

38

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US HOW TO RESPOND IN FAITH



Lesson for the Lips

Recognize the authority of Jesus (Matthew 8:9-10). Remember that his Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). Realize it could happen in a moment (Matthew 8:13). In the space below, provide one memory of something you brought before the Lord in prayer for a long time and then God answered in a moment.

39

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US HOW TO RESPOND COMPASSIONATELY



Lesson for the Lips

Think of a person who is currently disappointing you. Ask God to help you write down a premeditated response of compassion. Keep in mind what we talked about today and ask Jesus to guide your words. Write your grace-filled response here:

40

GOD'S WORD TEACHES US HOW TO RESPOND TO PROBLEMS



Lesson for the Lips

Below, map out, describe, or pick apart a problem in your life for the Lord to address. Start by confessing who God is. Then lay your requests out like Hezekiah did, spreading everything before the Lord.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, thank you for this unique lesson from Genesis 24. We have a prayer closet we can take anywhere and use at any time. Remind me that I can always pause and say a silent prayer in my heart closet. Let me trust you, just as this servant trusted you, especially when it comes to the situation most heavy on my heart today. You know what I need to pray. I'll listen and watch as you finish this prayer . . .