

“Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. Turn away from evil and do what is good; seek peace and pursue it.” Psalm 34:13-14 (CSB)

These verses remind us that doing what's right - in this case, saying what is right - is an active thing to do. We can't just decide we are going to say good things and then everything we say will miraculously be good. It is a conscious decision that we have to make. To keep away from something, perhaps a thing we know to be dangerous, takes an effort. Sometimes it's just really tempting to look past that danger sign but most of us are good at not straying there and we barely notice the moment where curiosity asks us whether we should just take a little peek.

The tongue is, however, more difficult to keep from evil. How easy it is just to say the first thing that pops into our heads, how we yell and scream at somebody because they didn't do something the 'right' way. Or what about that little white lie that we said because it felt like there was no harm in it at the time? Keeping ourselves from this is difficult. With God's help, it is possible, but it isn't easy. But with time, patience and plenty of prayer, it does become a little easier. The best way is to ask God to convict us of things so we know when we say something hurtful to another human being. When we know, we can repent. As we repent we become more aware of the words we say more often.

Then, like the tongue being kept away from evil, like an overly excited dog being kept on a lead, we are asked to turn away from evil. Not just our words now, but our actions too. But what is this evil we should be turning away from? Most of us don't go and commit murder just for the fun of it, or deliberately go out of our way to upset the people around us, so what is the evil we need to turn from? Ultimately, that list is down to you as an individual. Anything from spending time we planned to spend with God scrolling aimlessly through social media to blatant acts of destruction.

Finally we are called to seek peace. Another active word, but something that sounds a bit more positive. We all want peace - and probably quiet too, but that peace is not what is taken about here. We need to seek the peace Jesus speaks of when he talks about giving his peace to his disciples (John 14:27). That peace what isn't just an absence of anxiety or a shaky treaty of non-violence between various people. This peace is something that is almost impossible to explain unless you've felt it. It's a feeling of knowing that something is right, or a calmness within a time of anxiety that has no reason for being there. It's a feeling that washes over you when you need it most. Or an acknowledgement from God. The scripture says to pursue this peace, but without understanding what it is, how can it be pursued? Might I suggest that the answers are, frankly, rather a cliché within churches, but simply to spend time with God. Read and study scripture. Sing - if that's something you like, or write poetry, draw or be creative in other ways. And pray. Pray for wisdom, peace and understanding. These things will assist in growing in spiritual maturity.

Pray

Lord of peace, today we ask for your peace which passes all understanding to enter all your children. May the peace you provide lead us on the paths you have set before us so we do not stray from your ways. Help us to keep our tongues leashed so they say no evil to any of your creation. You know where we have failed and where we need to turn away from habits and thoughts that are evil and against your ways. Help to convict and guide us away from these destructive things. Amen.