



MINDING THE TONGUE

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 3

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that tongue (speech) also refers to all forms of written and electronic communication
- Understand that Allah (SWT) has given us a unique ability to speak and communicate and that we should be thankful to him for this gift by using it wisely
- Understand that we do not know the character of a person until they speak
- Know that swearing is forbidden in Islam
- Understand that we have to guard our tongue when speaking
- Understand that we should be wary of how much we speak

MINDING THE TONGUE

In today's lesson we are going to discuss something very important; it is one of the hardest challenges that we have to face in our everyday lives.

OUR TONGUE IS A GIFT FROM ALLAH (SWT)

Minding the tongue means to be careful of what we say to others. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"And speak good words to people" (2:83)

What does this ayah mean? It means that we should be polite and nice to people when we talk to them. Our ability to speak is an extremely valuable gift from Allah (SWT); it is a gift which Allah has not gifted to any of His other creatures. Allah (SWT) has entrusted us with this gift and so we need to take care of it!

If your mum gifted you an iPad for your birthday, do you think she would like it if you scratched it, threw it on the floor and played with it as if it were a ball? And would you, knowing how valuable the iPad is, throw it around and abuse it? Similarly, Allah (SWT) has gifted us with a very valuable tongue – we can use it in any way we like – to spread goodness, praise Him and be nice to people *or* to swear, backbite and lie. Which one would you use it for?

MINDING YOUR TONGUE ONLINE

Minding our tongue is not only limited to what we *say* to people physically but also what we say through e-mail, texting and of course also on social networking sites like Facebook. These are all different ways of communication that are becoming more common. Just because these are online and you are not physically *saying* anything to someone, this does not mean that we have an excuse to insult anyone or be rude to them.

Just like we should and we would be careful not to insult or be rude to people when we are talking to them face-to-face; we should be cautious and careful when we are dealing with people over the internet through email, texting or any social networking site. All forms of communication have the same ethical principles.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU... SAY

You make a new friend at school, but he is very quiet and doesn't talk at all. He just sits down next to you and does his work; will you be able to get to know what kind of person he is? You wouldn't know what kind of person he is until he talks. Therefore, the way we talk and the things we talk about define and determine what kind of person we are. This is what Imam Ali (AS) meant when he said:

"Man is concealed under his tongue."

Therefore, the way in which we use our tongue and the things we talk about are what show other people what kind of person we are.

THE TRIPLE FILTER TEST

There are three questions you should ask yourself before you decide to say something/post something on Facebook/write a text; your words need to pass through this triple filter test before coming out of your mouth – so ask yourself:

- 1) Is it the truth? If you are going to say something, first ask yourself whether what you are going to say is the truth. Are you going to say something you've just heard from anybody or are you going to say something factual? Think about it first.
- 2) Is it good? Is what you want to say going to spread goodness and is it good for the people around you? If you want to talk about someone, are you going to say something good?

- 3) The third and most important question is: Is it useful? Is what you are about to say going to be beneficial to those around you; if not, why say it?

If you pass these three tests; then only you should say what you have to – otherwise there is no point. Our challenge this week is to ask ourselves these three questions before saying anything, posting anything on Facebook, texting someone and of course writing an email to anyone. Hopefully by the end of this week we will become used to asking ourselves this and it will become a habit.

OVER TALKING IS DANGEROUS

Islam is a religion of moderation. Anything in excess is not considered healthy in Islam. For example, it is not recommended to eat more than your fill or to sleep too much. Similarly, talking too much is also discouraged in Islam.

Why do you think this is?

Over-talking can lead to us saying things that we may regret; and remember we can *never* take our words back! This story should help us understand the consequences of over talking and saying something we may regret later on:

A younger woman one day said something that hurt (insulted) her best friend. She regretted it immediately, and would have done anything to have taken the words back. But they were said, impulsively, in a moment of thoughtlessness, and as close as she and her friend were, she didn't consider the effects of her words beforehand.

In her effort to undo what she had done, she went to an older, wiser woman in the village, explaining her situation, and asked for advice. The older, wiser woman listened patiently in an effort to determine just how sincere the younger woman was and how far she was willing to go to correct the situation.

The older, wiser woman said, "There are two things needed to do to make amends. The first of the two is extremely difficult. Tonight, take your best feather pillows, and open a small hole in each one. Then, before the sun rises, you must put a single feather on the doorstep of each house in town.

When you are through, come back to me. If you've done the first thing completely, I'll tell you the second."

The younger woman hurried home to prepare for her chore. All night long she laboured alone in the cold. She went from doorstep to doorstep, taking care not to overlook a single house. Her fingers were frozen, the wind was so sharp it caused her eyes to water, but she ran on, through the darkened streets, thankful there was something she could do to put things back the way they once were.

Just as the sun rose, she returned to the older, wiser woman. She was exhausted, but relieved that her efforts would be rewarded. "My pillows are empty. I placed a feather on the doorstep of each home."

Now, said the older, wiser woman, "Go back and refill your pillows. Then everything will be as it was before."

The younger woman was stunned. "You know that's impossible! The wind blew away each feather as fast as I placed them on the doorsteps! You didn't say I had to get them back! If this is the second requirement, then things will never be the same."

"That's true", said the older, wiser woman. "Never forget. Each of your words is like a feather in the wind. Once spoken, no amount of effort, regardless how heartfelt or sincere, can ever return them to your mouth. Choose your words well, and guard them most of all in the presence of those you love, because remember one kind word can warm three winter months."

SWEARING IS FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM

In Islam, swearing is absolutely forbidden! The hardest time to guard our tongue is when we are angry; that is when we tend to say things we don't mean and sometimes that anger may even lead us to swear – this is forbidden in Islam.

Allah (SWT) tells us in Hadith Qudsi:

"O son of Adam, if your tongue is urging you to say things I have made impermissible for you to say, I have provided you with two shutters- your teeth and your lips- so shut them"

This basically means that if we want to swear or say something which is

not allowed, then it is better to just keep silent and not open our mouths.

ⁱ Review Questions

Q1. If we are not sure whether something will be good and useful or not, we should:

- a) Say it anyway, because no one likes quiet people
- b) We should remain silent
- c) We should say it anyway because it might be funny

Q2. Bullying:

- a) Is not allowed in Islam and is a form of misusing the tongue
- b) Is okay as long as it is online
- c) Is okay if the other person is not cool

Q3. People usually get to know us through:

- a) How we look
- b) What we say and do
- c) Who our parents are

ⁱ Bibliography
<http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/mis57.asp>