



# GUIDED BIBLE STUDY

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## What I Say Next

Speaker: Mercedes

Scripture quotations: World English Bible (WEB), public domain. Text: [ebible.org/eng-web/](http://ebible.org/eng-web/).

### Highlighted Scripture

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- **Genesis 1:1-3**

God speaks and brings creation into being. This reveals his unique authority as Creator. Our words influence people and choices; they do not possess God's power to create reality. Mercedes' opening reflection invites us to take that influence seriously.

- **James 3:4-5 (WEB, verse 5)**

*"So the tongue is also a little member, and boasts great things. See how a small fire can spread to a large forest!"*

A small rudder guides a large ship, and a small spark can start a great fire. James warns that speech has consequences far beyond its size. The chapter also exposes our need for God's help: lasting change calls for humility and dependence on him.

- **Proverbs 15:1 (WEB)**

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

Gentleness can interrupt escalating conflict; cutting remarks feed it. This is wisdom for our own response, not a guarantee that another person will calm down. We can speak truth firmly while refusing to use it as a weapon.

- **Proverbs 16:28 (WEB)**

*"A perverse man stirs up strife. A whisperer separates close friends."*

Gossip damages trust and divides relationships. Examine why you are sharing, with whom, and toward what end. Seeking confidential counsel or reporting harm can be necessary; wisdom does not impose a fixed time limit on grieving or asking for help.

- **Genesis 37:23-28; 39:11-20**

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, and a false accusation later led to prison. His suffering was real and undeserved. His story gives us room to name wrongdoing honestly as we consider how to respond faithfully.

- **Genesis 50:20 (WEB)**

*"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to save many people alive, as is happening today."*

Joseph identifies both his brothers' evil intentions and God's work to preserve lives. His hope rests in God's providence. Trusting God does not require denying pain, rushing healing, or abandoning wise boundaries; this account does not promise that every loss will be visibly reversed.

- **Proverbs 10:19 (WEB)**

*"In the multitude of words there is no lack of disobedience, but he who restrains his lips does wisely."*

Unchecked speech creates opportunities to sin. Restraint helps us listen, weigh our motives, and choose an appropriate response. Sometimes silence is wise; sometimes love requires an honest conversation.

- **Matthew 5:37 (WEB)**

*"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' Whatever is more than these is of the evil one."*

Jesus is addressing oaths and dependable truthfulness. Mercedes connects that integrity to her desire to stop using profanity. Her practical challenge is to express feelings clearly and respectfully while letting trustworthy words stand on their own.

## **Discussion Questions**

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- Mercedes' daughter noticed a gap between her mother's example and her expectations. How do you respond when someone points out a similar gap in your speech? What would a humble response teach those watching?
- Think of a disagreement in which you wanted the last word. How might your response change if your aim were truth and peace rather than the satisfaction of a cutting remark?
- When you discuss someone who is absent, what helps you distinguish seeking wise counsel from recruiting others to take your side? How could you redirect a conversation that has become gossip?
- Joseph named the evil done to him while recognizing God's work. How can you make room for both honest grief and hope when describing a painful experience, without pressuring yourself or others to heal quickly?
- Where do extra words, exaggerated promises, or profanity show up in your speech? What are you trying to communicate in those moments, and how could you express it with greater honesty and restraint?

## **Reflection Challenge**

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For the next seven days, choose one recurring speech habit to bring before God. Practice Mercedes' challenge to speak less and speak truthfully. Pay attention to what you say next, especially in the ordinary moments when you feel tired, defensive, or frustrated.

### **Ask yourself:**

- Does this need to be said, does it need to be said now, and does it need to be said by me?
- Am I trying to help, to be understood, or to hurt someone back?
- What feeling am I trying to express, and can I name it without an insult or a curse word?
- Where do I need God's help to speak, to listen, or to seek trustworthy support?

**Try this:**

- Before one difficult reply each day, pause for a breath and pray for wisdom. Choose one clear, respectful sentence instead of a sharp remark.
- When a conversation turns toward gossip, decline to repeat unnecessary details. Ask what constructive step would help, or change the subject.
- If you speak harshly, apologize specifically without excuses. Restate your concern respectfully, including when a child heard the original words.
- Each evening, write down one moment of restraint and one moment to revisit. Thank God for growth and ask for help with tomorrow's next words.

**Remember**

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- A small tongue can have a large effect on a relationship.
- Gentleness and truthful firmness can belong in the same sentence.
- Protecting trust includes refusing gossip and seeking help wisely.
- You can name real harm while entrusting your future to God.
- Not every opinion needs an audience; dependable words build trust.
- Growth includes receiving correction, making amends, and depending on God's grace.

**Prayer**

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Heavenly Father,

You hear the words I speak and know the motives beneath them. Forgive my harshness, careless talk, and desire to have the last word. Help me receive correction with humility and make honest apologies when I hurt someone. Teach me to express frustration clearly, protect others' trust, and keep my word. Meet me in places of hurt and guide me toward wise support. By your Spirit, help me pause, listen, and choose words that honor you and care for the people around me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.