



Bless
These
Lips

**Make Over Your Words
to Influence Your World**



A Women's Small-Group Bible Study

Sharla Fritz



This study is dedicated to John:
your words of love and support are an
inspiration for my life and this book.

And to the Wednesday evening Bible study gals:
your laughter, prayers, and insights into
God's Word lift me up each week.



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SUGGESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP PARTICIPANTS

1. Begin small-group time with prayer.
2. Every participant should feel free to express her thoughts. Comments shared in the small group should remain confidential unless you have received permission to share them outside your group.
3. If your meeting time does not allow you to discuss all of the questions for the week, the leader should choose the questions most meaningful to the group.
4. Close by sharing concerns and prayer requests, and then pray together.

INTRODUCTION

I did it again. Without first initiating my brain, I opened my mouth and spewed out something stupid. I'm totally embarrassed. Others are hurt.

I wish I could get an instant Mouth Makeover. How relieved I would be if I could find some simple way to prevent mouth mishaps from happening. If only I could call up a Magic Makeup Lady to fix my problem!

"Hello, this is Luscious Lips, Incorporated. How may I help you?"

"Oh, thank goodness you're there! I'm in desperate need of a Mouth Makeover!"

"Oh dear, that does sound serious. Tell me exactly, what is the problem?"

"Well, I hate to admit it, but every time I open my mouth, tactless and thoughtless words seem to come out!"

"Now, calm down. I'm quite sure I can find a solution. In order to offer you our best advice, I need to ask a few more questions. So, what brand of lipstick are you using on your lips right now?"

"That's easy! The brand I've been using lately is Loud and Lauder."

"Ah yes, that is a popular brand. Can you tell me which colors have you been wearing?"

"Let me get out my makeup bag and check. Let's see. Here are two of my favorites—Insensitive Iris and Hurtful Hyacinth. And this one I wear all the time—it's called—oh, Foot-in-Mouth Fuchsia!"

"Well, I think we may have found the problem. Fortunately, this is an easy fix. First, I recommend our best lip exfoliator to scrub off any residue from your previous lipsticks and then daily use of our number one product, Perfection Pink. I can send those right out to you and that should take care of the problem!"

If only fixing my mouth were as easy as ordering a new tube of lipstick. My days of putting my foot in my mouth would be over. No longer would I have to taste sock lint or shoe leather.

I have wished for a Mouth Makeover for a long time. When I was young, I wished I was like the girls who were the life of the party—the ones who talked easily while I sat tongue-tied in the corner. Later, I admired the caring, empathetic ladies in my life—the women everyone in my circle of friends went to for advice. Then I admired the moms who seemed to never lose their patience—the mothers who always had a pearl of wisdom for their children.

If there were a Magic Makeup Lady, I would ask her for the product that

would enable me to tell a joke without forgetting the punch line. I would purchase the lipstick that would enable me to say just the right thing at just the right time. I would pay dearly for the lip gloss that would prevent me from yelling at my kids or nagging at my husband.

I want to be like my sister-in-law, Kathy, who is gifted at making everyone feel important by asking insightful questions that bring out the best in people. I want to be like my friend Linda, who never fails to make me feel good about myself. I want to be like my sister, Shelly, who always makes me laugh.

But most of all, I yearn to emulate Christ, who gave words of wisdom. I aspire to imitate the Savior who shared comfort and encouragement, forgiveness and peace. I desire to be like Jesus who offered grace.

Although it would be nice to be the life of the party and always know the right thing to say, the real reason I want to transform my speech, the reason I think it is worth the effort, is because Jesus thinks it's important. Recently, I read through the Bible and wrote down all the passages I could find that dealt with speech. I was amazed at how many times God talks about our words. Did you know that the Book of Proverbs alone has 108 verses dealing with our mouths, lips, and tongues? Our heavenly Father is encouraging all of us to begin a Mouth Makeover!

Not long ago, I went to a cosmetics expert at a department store and asked for a literal Mouth Makeover. Patty, my makeup artist for the day, first used an exfoliator that softened my lips by removing dead skin and rough spots. Then she used a product that moisturized, repaired, and plumped my lips. The next step in my Mouth Makeover was a lip liner used to define my lips and to help the lipstick adhere. Patty followed that with a long-lasting lip color in a gorgeous neutral color. Finally, she added a dab of sparkly lip gloss in the middle of my lips to add a bit more shine.

If I had wanted to, I also could have purchased lip balm, lip primer, and lip sealer.

Who knew it took so many products to achieve the perfect pout?

Ultimately, most of us will not be willing to spend that much time and money on fancy lip products that will have only a temporary effect on our beauty. Probably some of us prefer not to fuss with makeup at all!

However, when we go to our Heavenly Makeup Artist, He will assist us with a true Mouth Makeover. He can help us use a spiritual version of an exfoliator to scrub off our negative words. He can teach us to use a soothing lip balm that will help us to spread encouragement. His Word, like a fully stocked cosmetics bag,

has all the tools necessary to beautify our lips with praise and truthful witness.

Now I can't tell you that using these tools will enable you to have a flawless mouth and that you will never say another rotten thing in your life. There is no Perfection Pink available here on earth. But we can receive God's grace and become more consistent in wearing Complimenting Coral, Revitalizing Red, and Praising Peony.

But I can tell you that this Mouth Makeover is worth the effort because transforming our words can improve our relationships. Changing what comes across our lips will affect our attitude toward life. And most important, altering our tongues' response will enrich our connection to God as we spend more time in prayer and praise.

In each session of this study, we tackle a different step in developing godly speech. Each chapter has reading material and a study guide. The readings include an examination of what the Bible has to say about our words and some practical steps to take toward a Mouth Makeover. I encourage you to write in your copy of this book. Underline or highlight passages that inspire or challenge you. Make notes in the margins. Write questions about things that are unclear or that you want to discuss with your pastor or members of your group. The study guide will help you to discover additional Bible passages on the topic and to apply these truths to your life.

There are a few tools consistently used throughout the book:

What key lesson did you learn today? Each day you will be asked this question. Your answer can be from the reading, from the Bible passages examined, or from a thought that God revealed during your time with Him. Answering this question will help you to choose one idea or concept to inspire your day.

Memory verse: You will be instructed daily to write out the memory verse for the week. The act of writing out the words of Scripture will help you to commit them to heart. You might also write the verse on a card to carry in your purse or on a sticky note to display by the sink, mirror, or computer monitor. Storing God's Word in our hearts is one of the most effective ways of changing our habits.

Meaningful Makeover: The Bible is full of fascinating people, amazing stories, and thought-provoking quotes, but if that is all we get out of it, then we have missed the point. The Bible is God speaking to us, instructing us, and guiding us. The Meaningful Makeover section will help you to apply God's Word to your life. Each day this section will ask you to focus on one aspect of your speech and evaluate your progress. There is space available to journal your reactions or prayers.

LIP Study: On the fifth day of every week, we will examine more deeply one section of Scripture using a three-step process following the acronym LIP:

Look for the Facts

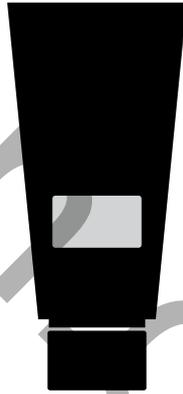
Interpret the Meaning

Pursue the Application

Allow a little more time to complete your study on this day. Using this three-step process will enable you to discover details in God's Word. It will help you take time to hear Him speak to your heart. If you are doing the study in a group, you might talk about the process. Or perhaps have each person share the lessons she learned that week doing this exercise. I hope that you will find the LIP technique helpful.

We don't need a Magic Makeup Lady to accomplish a Mouth Makeover. We don't have to spend a fortune to find the right color for our lips. Our heavenly Father has all we need to have the perfect shade of speech. His Word and His Spirit will provide everything required to develop lovely, God-pleasing lips.

Exfoliate:
Scrub with Forgiveness



Memory Verse

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.
Psalm 19:14*

Do You Need a Mouth Makeover?

For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. James 3:2

One hectic Saturday, I was driving along a busy road, trying to keep up with traffic and paying attention to the cars around me, when the traffic light turned red and I found myself stopped behind Marty's Handyman Service van. While I waited for the light to turn green, I read Marty's slogan: "I can fix what your husband repaired."

My husband, John, is a fix-it genius, but I laughed out loud when I read those words because I have heard many stories of people who paid more for a repair after they tried a do-it-yourself project than they would have paid had they hired a professional in the first place.

As I contemplated Marty's ad, I found myself thinking how wonderful it would be if I could hire a service to fix what my mouth has done. There have been many occasions when I would have jumped at the chance to use a business that promised "I can fix what you wish you hadn't said."

One such occasion happened when I was about twenty years old. I was talking to a friend I had not seen in a while. A mutual friend had reported months ago that he and his wife were expecting a child, so I asked if they had brought the baby to the gathering.

"No," my friend answered, "it turned out to be a false pregnancy."

"False pregnancy?" I queried.

"Yes, she had all the symptoms, but was not actually carrying a child."

I should have expressed my condolences, but for some reason what came out of my mouth was: "Oh, we thought you would have had the baby by now!"

His face fell, and he softly said, "So did we." At that point, my mind fully registered that what I had said was insensitive and I promptly apologized. But the damage was done.

If I had thought before I had spoken, I probably would have realized that their loss was real, their heartache painful. How I wished that I could take back my words that caused the look of anguish on my friend's face. If only I could call up Marty's Handyman Service and say, "My mouth has messed up again. Can you come and fix the damage?"

Can you relate? Wouldn't it be nice if we could hire a service to take care of our mouth messes? Or even better, wouldn't it be terrific if we could call up a Magical Makeup Lady to purchase a new tube of lipstick that would give us the perfect Mouth Makeover? Wouldn't it be wonderful if applying the right shade of lip gloss would prevent our lips from spouting lies, gossip, and hurtful words?

Every day, I choose to wear lipstick, lip stain, or lip gloss on my lips. Some of my favorite shades are natural blush, pink kiss, and coral silk. I opt for a product that moisturizes my lips and a color that brightens my face.

Did You Know?

- In the U.S. hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on lipstick each year.
- 75–85 percent of American women wear this product.
- Lipstick consistently outsells other cosmetics by a wide margin.
- Clinique sells a tube of lipstick every second.¹

Each day, I also have a choice in my speech. I start out the day with great intent to wear the shades of speech that will soothe my family and cheer up my friends. But sometimes I inadvertently choose colors that not only fail to brighten my face, but darken others' faces as well. It is then I realize my need for a Mouth Makeover.

Unfortunately, a Mouth Makeover is not as easy as going to the cosmetics counter and buying a new lipstick. I can't purchase a tube of Perfection Pink that will block all my angry outbursts, careless speech, and hurtful words. A Mouth Makeover that will change my words begins with God. He has a plan to transform my lips.

The first step in our Mouth Makeover is to exfoliate. A makeup expert will tell you that before you put lipstick on your lips, you must first slough off the dead skin. She will help you choose an exfoliating product that will ensure a smooth palette for a lovely, rich color.

A Prayer for a Mouth Makeover

Use Psalm 19:14 as a prayer to begin your Mouth Makeover:

May every utterance and every word that comes out of my mouth and every musing and thought of my heart bring You pleasure and delight, O LORD. Let me always speak as if I were in Your presence for truly You are always with me. Help me to remember You are my Redeemer—the One who saved me and who will continue to forgive me when I fail. Help me recall that You are my Rock—the source of my strength. Psalm 19:14 (Sharla Fritz amplified version)

God also wants to do some exfoliating in our lives. He wants to scrub off the effects of any negative words we may have spoken and receive His word of forgiveness. This week, He will help us to recognize our messy mouth and will launder our lips. We will receive a new chance to speak words of encouragement, praise, and thanksgiving. And God will help us to recognize the power we have in a telling tongue.

A Word of Forgiveness for Today

Christ my Redeemer, forgives me when I fail. He is my source of strength in my Mouth Makeover.

Makeup experts tell us if we are going to wear only a single cosmetic, lipstick is the one that can transform our faces and the way we feel about ourselves. Sporting a new shade of speech may not give us a cover girl look, but it can transform our relationships, change our self-image, reflect a Christlike attitude, and most important, please our Savior.

Father in heaven, it is my desire that my words would bring You pleasure and delight. Too often I make a mess of things. I know that it will take some work on my part and a reliance on Your grace to change the shade of speech I wear. Help me to experience a Mouth Makeover. Thank You for Your work in my heart and mouth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 1

Lipstick Lesson

1. How is the lipstick you put on your mouth similar to the words that come out of it? How is it different?

2. Our memory verse this week is Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." Let's examine each phrase in this verse to bring more meaning to it.
 - a. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart"
What do the following passages say about the connection between our mouths and our hearts?
Proverbs 16:23:

Matthew 12:33-37:

 - b. "Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD" How do we become acceptable in God's sight?
Romans 3:23-24:

Ephesians 2:8:

 - c. "My rock and my redeemer" The following verses talk about God as a rock and a redeemer. What characteristics of God do you see in these passages? How can these characteristics assist us in a Mouth Makeover?
Psalm 18:1-2:

Psalm 103:2-4:

3. What key lesson did you learn today?

4. Our memory verse for this week is Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." To help you memorize this verse, write the words here in your own handwriting. You might also want to post the verse in conspicuous spots like your mirror, computer, or fridge.

Meaningful Makeover

Pray to God the words of our memory verse. Ask Him to help you be aware of your speech today. Pray that your words will be pleasing to Him and valuable to others. At the end of the day or the start of the next day, evaluate your words and use the space below to journal about what came out of your mouth. This is not meant to be condemning, but simply to make you more attentive to what comes out of your mouth.

Messy Mouth

Woe to me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts! Isaiah 6:5

STEP 1

When I was pregnant with Anna, my first child, I read many books about child-rearing. I wanted to do all the right things and speak all the correct phrases. Before Anna was born, I had delusions that I could be the perfect parent.

One of the things I vowed I would never say was “Because I said so!” All the parenting books I read instructed me to reason with my child and explain my rules and directions. I didn’t want to demand obedience from my daughter without logic and motivation.

I was able to keep this resolution until one day when I now had two small children demanding my time and attention. They were in the family room and their squabbling swelled while my tolerance shriveled. When I couldn’t stand the noise any longer, I shouted above the din, “Quiet down!” One of them (probably the three-year-old) asked “Why?”

I shouted again, “Because I said so!”

Even as the words flew out of my mouth, I realized what I had done. I had said the words I swore I would never say. It was almost as if the words hung visibly in the air. I could see them there, inside a cartoonist’s word balloon. How could I have let those words slip out?

Of course, those are not the worst words I have ever said. Other words I have spoken have been hurtful or spiteful—not simply contrary to parenting advice. But this incident shows how difficult it is to control the tongue. Even words I promised myself I would never say tumbled out of my lips.

I was trying to wear Patient Peony, but I ended up putting Because-I-Said-So Bloom on my lips. If my most fervent resolutions and most determined efforts were not enough to restrain my lips, how could I ever change my speech? Was there any way to achieve a Mouth Makeover?

Top Ten Ways to Get Your Mouth in Trouble

1. Always talk. Never listen.
 2. Interrupt when you have something to say.
 3. Complain loudly about anything and everything.
 4. Talk endlessly about yourself, your kids, your grandkids.
 5. Be sure that everyone knows about your friend's embarrassing situation.
 6. Speak before you think.
 7. Make jokes about your spouse.
 8. Let your mouth run on automatic when you're angry.
 9. Nag! Nag! Nag!
 10. Assume you can control your tongue on your own without God's help.
-

In the Old Testament, we are told about an extreme Mouth Makeover. This dramatic transformation happened to a man of God, a scribe who meticulously copied Scripture. No doubt he was a follower of God who conscientiously obeyed the Law. But the Lord gave him a vision that changed the way he looked at himself.

One day, this scribe was given a glimpse of heaven. In this peek into eternity, he saw the Lord seated on a high throne wearing a robe with a train so long it filled the temple. In breathless wonder, the scribe saw angels flying above God Almighty, singing majestic songs extolling His holiness and glory. The man of God was amazed that although these six-winged beings had never sinned against the Lord, they were so in awe of His glory that they used two of their wings to cover their faces. The scribe almost needed to cover his own ears as the glorious and overpowering sound of the angels' voices shook the doors of the temple.

In the sight of God's awesome holiness, the scribe was struck by his own unholiness. He realized his failures. He felt grimy, filthy. This scribe was so burdened by his transgressions that he wailed with a deep, guttural cry.

What had this man done that he was in such a state of despair? Had he struck someone? betrayed someone? killed someone?

The scribe in this story was the great prophet Isaiah. He was no doubt a

faithful servant of God, but encountering the glory of God brought him face-to-face with his own sinfulness. The vision of a pure and holy God hit him with his own uncleanness. And he realized which part of him was dirty.

His mouth.

The prophet recorded his story in Isaiah 6. He told his readers that when he saw the Lord, all he could do was cry out, “Woe to me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5). That first word, *woe*, is a passionate cry of grief or despair. Isaiah was utterly depressed about his condition. He realized he needed a Mouth Makeover.

What words had Isaiah spoken that caused him such distress? Had he cursed? lied? gossiped? Or like me, had he raised his voice at his children?

We don’t know what specific words upset the prophet, but I think his anguish was caused by a new realization: His mouth had not only harmed people in his life, it had also wounded God.

Thinking about Isaiah’s response, I realize that I often put my foot in my mouth and sometimes regret my words, but I may not be convicted about my lips. I may feel foolish and embarrassed, but do I lament the fact that I am actually hurting God with my mouth?

✚ *A true Mouth Makeover begins when I am not only embarrassed by my mouth mishaps but am aware that my hurtful words grieve God.*

Put yourself in the sandals of the scribe for a moment. If God gave you a 3-D surround sound experience of His holiness, what might your reaction be? What area of your life would make you feel uncomfortable? Would your mouth be the first thing you would cover up?

A Word of Forgiveness for Today

God begins our Mouth Makeover through Baptism by wiping off the stain of our guilt and cleansing our messy mouths.

Fortunately, when we look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s Word and see that we’ve been wearing the shades of Insensitive Iris and Hurtful Hyacinth on our lips, we can begin a Mouth Makeover. When we are saddened by the color of our words, God begins the transformation. He does not leave us in a state of despair. Through the water and the Word of Holy Baptism, He begins the exfoliating process by wiping off the stain of our guilt and cleansing our messy mouths.

Heavenly Father, I know I have a messy mouth. Too often, I don't think before I speak and am embarrassed by what rolls off my tongue. But I realize now that my words also grieve You. I desire to change. Cleanse my messy mouth and help me start this day with pure words. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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DAY 2

Lipstick Lesson

1. Have you worn any of these messy shades of speech? Check all that you have worn in the last week.

- Motormouth Mocha
- Nagging Nectarine
- Interrupting Ivory
- Boastful Burgundy
- Muttering Mulberry
- Angry Apricot
- Reckless Rose
- Hurtful Hyacinth
- Profane Peony
- Insensitive Iris
- Slander Scarlet
- Lying Lilac
- Belittling Berry
- Criticizing Cranberry
- Abusive Amethyst
- Whiny Watermelon
- Bossy Begonia
- Foot-in-Mouth Fuchsia

.....
STEP 1
.....

Why do you think you wore those messy shades? Stress? Fatigue? Habit? A difficult person? (If we examine the triggers to our regrettable words, we may be able to avoid them in the future.)

2. Read Isaiah 6:1–5. Answer the following questions:

- a. Why do you think the angels covered their faces and feet? How does seeing their response affect the way you approach God?

- b. The angels sang, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.” The word *holy* has the idea of cleanness and purity, but also has a sense of apartness. God is set apart from creation—He is not created. He is totally unique. Will this truth affect your prayer life? How?

- c. When the angels sang, the doorposts shook. Their words had power. Our words also have power. Name an instance where the words you spoke today had a positive effect:
- d. What do you feel when you read Isaiah's reaction to seeing God's glory?
3. What key lesson did you learn today?
4. Our memory verse for this week is Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer." To help you memorize this verse, write the words here in your own handwriting.

Meaningful Makeover

God knows our shortcomings, but invites us to come to Him for forgiveness. Look again at the shades of messy speech you checked in Question 1 today. Write a prayer confessing those unattractive words and receive God's grace.

Laundered Lips

Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for. Isaiah 6:7

One hot, sultry summer day when I was a kid, my friends Nancy, Janet, and I were playing in their backyard, swinging, sliding, and working up a thirst. After a while we decided to go into the house to get a drink, but when Nancy poured out the lemonade, she spilled a little.

“Darn it,” she said, running to the sink to get the dishcloth to mop up the spill.

Even though Nancy’s mother was sitting in the living room, that naughty word reached her ears and soon her mom was dragging Nancy down the hall to the bathroom.

I asked Nancy’s sister, Janet, what was happening.

“I’ll bet she’s going to get her mouth washed out with soap,” Janet said.

Washed out with soap? I had never heard of this practice before and my child mind tried to figure out how that was going to help.

Then Nancy emerged out of the bathroom, a little lather still around her lips. She was wiping her mouth and spitting, trying to get rid of the dreadful taste. Then I got the idea. Nancy’s mom was trying to clean Nancy’s mouth and do it in a way that would leave a taste in her mouth that might make her think twice before she said “darn” again.

Remember the story of Isaiah? His taste of God’s holiness made him painfully aware of the bad words he had said. But God did not use a bar of soap to clean out Isaiah’s mouth. He used fire. One of the Lord’s holy seraphs used tongs to grab a hot coal from God’s altar. The angel touched the coal to Isaiah’s mouth and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for” (Isaiah 6:7).

Isaiah recognized his messy mouth, but he could not fix it. Isaiah did not grab the purifying coal. God’s angel did.

✠ *The trouble with talking too fast is you may say something you haven’t thought of yet. Ann Landers*

We cannot buy magic makeup remover to fix our mouths. There is no special serum available that can wipe away the stain of Slander Scarlet or Reckless Rose. But God is able to cleanse our mouths. When we come with repentant hearts, He scrubs off the guilt. When we kneel at His Table, He removes the stain of our angry and hurtful words.

What a relief! My words have not measured up to the words God would like me to use. But once I have confessed my mouth mishaps, God offers the cleansing power of forgiveness.

Look at Isaiah's reaction to God's purifying process. Isn't it interesting to note that Isaiah does not scream in pain when the live coal touches his lips? He let out an agonizing yell of "Woe is me!" when faced with his own guilt, but the Bible does not record any cry of pain when the burning coal touched him. Perhaps this was because the relief of forgiveness was greater than any physical pain he felt.

Sometimes when I close my eyes at night, the events of the day replay in my mind. I remember a foolish remark I made. I recall words I spoke in impatience. Or I cringe, thinking of how I talked when I should have simply listened. I wonder, "Will I ever learn?"

It would be easy to feel hopeless about my mouth. To feel dejected about my inability to restrain my tongue. To wonder if I will ever be able to control my lips.

A Word of Forgiveness for Today

God uses the exfoliator of grace to scrub off the guilt of our words.

But when I discover I have once again used hurtful shades of speech, the grace of Jesus Christ that is ours through faith is the ultimate makeup remover. When I have neglected to wear the color of life-giving words, His mercy is available. I may still have to live with the consequences of my words, but I can go to the God of forgiveness and daily receive pardon. He will wipe away all the unattractive shades of speech and give me a new start. And thankfully, He won't use a bar of soap.

God of grace and mercy, sometimes I wonder if I will ever be able to control my mouth. I confess that I have spoken out of anger and impatience. I have complained and whined. Cleanse my mouth and scrub it with Your grace so that I can speak Your praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 3

Lipstick Lesson

1. Have you ever witnessed someone getting their mouth washed out with soap? What was your reaction?
2. Read Isaiah 6:6–7. Put yourself in Isaiah’s place. How would you feel after hearing the seraph’s words?
3. What do the following verses say about forgiveness?
 - a. Psalm 86:5:
 - b. Colossians 1:13–14:
 - c. 1 John 1:8–9:
 - d. Have you acknowledged the gift of God’s forgiveness or do you tend to continue to replay your mistakes in your mind? How can you grab onto the truth the angel spoke, “Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for” (Isaiah 6:7)?
4. What key lesson did you learn today?
5. Write out this week’s memory verse. Try not to peek!

Meaningful Makeover

As a way to visualize God’s cleansing power of forgiveness, put on some lipstick and then watch yourself in the mirror as you wipe off its color. Thank God that He can remove the stain of messy speech from your lips. Here or in your journal, record your feelings about God’s forgiveness.

DAY 4

Take Two

STEP 1

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”
Isaiah 6:8

I could feel my panic level rising. As I prepared for the making of a companion DVD for my book *Divine Design*, my anxiety grew. I was excited about the opportunity to be the speaker for a teaching video, but I was also scared to death! The usual comfort I felt talking in front of groups disappeared at the thought of speaking in front of cameras. Although I prepared as thoroughly as possible, the butterflies in my stomach fluttered wildly when the big day arrived. In fact, those butterflies were so active that I had to redo the beginning of the first segment four times.

By the time I got to the third segment, I began to relax a bit. Inside I was shouting a little “Woohoo!” when I got through the entire session in one take. After the closing prayer, I felt a sense of relief until—Peggy, my editor, approached me, “Sharla,” she said, “that was a great dress rehearsal.”

Dress rehearsal? What went wrong?

“We just noticed at the end of the session that you had lipstick on your teeth. Take two.”

While I wasn’t thrilled at the prospect of having to perform the third speech again, I was grateful for the chance for a do-over. Pink teeth are not a particularly glamorous look. The episode of lipstick-stained teeth ended up in some electronic trash bin and I was given a fresh start.

Tips for Keeping Lipstick Off Your Teeth

1. Apply petroleum jelly. Not on your lips, but on your teeth. A thin layer of petroleum jelly makes a slick coating that lipstick will have a hard time adhering to.
2. Set the color with a little loose powder. Separate a two-ply tissue into one-ply. Place the one-ply piece over your lips and dust on the powder. Just enough powder will go through the tissue to set the color.

3. Use your index finger. Poke your finger in your mouth, make an O with your mouth around your finger and pull your finger out. Any stray lipstick on your inner lip will stick to your finger.

I sure wish I had known these tips sooner! But I am thankful that God also gives me the opportunity for a new beginning. Even when my mouth is stained with speech in the shades of nagging, belittling, or grumbling, He forgives me and gives me opportunities to use my mouth in ways that please Him. God also gave Isaiah new opportunities for speaking once the prophet had realized the unclean state of his mouth and received the angel's purifying touch. After the angel told Isaiah, "Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7), God asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8).

Are you surprised that God would offer Isaiah the opportunity to speak for Him? After all, the prophet had already come clean about his unclean lips. If he knew his mouth was dirty, certainly God was also aware of Isaiah's mouth problems. Yet God gives Isaiah the chance to be His spokesperson.

✝ *God's cleansing power gives us the opportunity to use our lips to serve Him.*

What was Isaiah's response? He had just been feeling totally despondent about the state of his mouth. Logic would tell me that the humble scribe would slink away, thinking the job of God's spokesman was way out of his reach. Let someone else more qualified take the position.

However, Isaiah shouts out, "Here I am! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

What made all of this possible? Forgiveness. Mercy. God's exfoliator of grace. God no longer saw any trace of unclean lips. He offered the cleansed Isaiah a new role, a chance to use his lips for the Lord.

Positive Ways to Use Our Lips

Once we have experienced God's grace, we are eager to use our lips to please God and bless others. Here are some positive ways to use our lips:

- Say thank you.
- Apologize.
- Talk about your faith.

- Give a sincere compliment.
- Recite Scripture.
- Quash gossip.
- Defend someone wrongly accused.
- Sing a song of praise.
- Relate a funny story.
- Pray.

And Isaiah? Because of God's action in his life, he went from "Woe is me" to "Here I am!" Depression to enthusiasm. Despondency to passion. He no longer felt the burden of his guilt, the stain of his unclean speech. His joy in forgiveness gave him the desire to serve the One who removed the uncleanness of his mouth and the weight of his sin.

✝ *My Mouth Makeover is a fashion statement of my internal spiritual makeover.*

God also offers us opportunities to serve Him with our lips. Once He has cleansed our lips from the effects of nagging, insensitivity, and criticizing, He gives us a whole new makeup bag stocked with encouragement, praise, and mercy. Thankfully, our mouth mishaps do not prevent us from participating in God's mission of sharing His grace. He extends His mercy to us, His baptized and forgiven daughters, and offers the chance to be a spokesperson for His love. Hear His words to you: "Take two!"

A Word of Forgiveness for Today

Once God has scrubbed my lips with His mercy, He no longer sees an unclean mouth.

Most Holy God, You know the state of my mouth. Still, You love me and "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5), You offer the opportunity for a new start—a chance to speak for You. Continue to remind me that You have bestowed this gift of speech. Help me to use the gift well, embracing the mission to speak grace to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 4

Lipstick Lesson

1. Have you ever wished for a do-over? Recall a time when your mouth messed up and you wished you could have a fresh start and summarize it here.

2. Read Isaiah 6:8. How did Isaiah respond to the forgiveness he received?

3. Are you willing to say, "Here I am! Send me"? Brainstorm and come up with three areas of your life where you could serve God with your mouth.

4. Read David's psalm of confession: Psalm 51.
 - a. In the space following, write some of the phrases David uses to ask for forgiveness. What word pictures does he use? (vv. 1–12)

 - b. Because of God's "steadfast love" (v. 1), David is confident of God's mercy. Write some phrases that describe our state after we've received forgiveness. (vv. 7–9)

 - c. How will David use his mouth now that he is restored to God? (vv. 13–15)

5. What key lesson did you learn today?

6. Write out this week's memory verse. No peeking!

STEP 1

Meaningful Makeover

Choose a positive way to use your mouth today. Embrace your mission to be God's spokesperson to this dark world. Write here or in your journal how you shared words of grace, kindness, or love.

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Telling Tongue

He said, "Go, and say to this people." Isaiah 6:9a

I have a friend who makes a point of speaking a word of blessing to every salesperson she encounters. As she takes her receipt or picks up her shopping bag from the counter, she looks the clerk in the eye and says, "God bless you. Have a great day."

Another friend of mine has the gift of encouragement. During fellowship time after church, Rhonda quietly seeks out people who are struggling with illness or grief. She listens attentively and offers a word of cheer.

My daughter, Anna, and her family have traveled halfway around the world to share the Good News of Jesus in China. They are studying the language and striving to use the new words they are learning in a way that will show the love of God.

These women are using their words to influence the world. They wear shades of speech that encourage and build up others. Like Isaiah, they embrace their mission to be God's spokesperson to a broken, hurting world.

After Isaiah volunteered, "Here I am! Send me," God immediately gave him an assignment. He said, "Go, and say to this people" (Isaiah 6:9). Our newly-cleansed mouths have a purpose. We are to speak life to the people in our lives.

Author Sharon Jaynes writes in her book *The Power of a Woman's Words*:

God has given us incredible power in our sphere of influence, and it begins with the words we speak. Few forces have as powerful an effect as the sounds that pass our lips. Our words can spark a child to accomplish great feats, encourage a husband to conquer the world, fan the dying embers of a friend's broken dreams into flame, encourage a fellow believer to run the race set before her, and draw a lost soul to Christ.²

Picture the words you speak as treasured gifts to the people around you. Hold out the present of hope, the gift of encouragement, the offering of comfort.

If you continued reading in Isaiah 6, you would see that the message Isaiah

was to share was one of judgment. Sometimes we are called on to share difficult words, but more often the words that God tells us to give others are words that build up His people in Christ. Later on in the Book of Isaiah, the prophet wrote, “The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning He awakens; He awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught” (Isaiah 50:4).

Isaiah spoke words that encouraged those who were tired and gave strength to those who were ready to give up. I hope I can do the same. I want my words to support my friends when they’re struggling, to strengthen my husband when he’s tired, to build up my children when they are discouraged.

Five Practical Suggestions to Assist You in Your Mouth Makeover

1. Be aware of the people you hang out with. Some people seem to be chronic gossips or constant complainers. You may need to limit your time with them or be ready to steer the conversation into more positive waters.
2. Count to ten. It’s an old technique, but an effective one when you’re upset or angry.
3. Try to see things from a different perspective. When you’re in a difficult conversation, ask God to help you to see things from the other person’s point of view.
4. Know your triggers. When is your mouth most likely to misbehave? In the car? With a difficult person in your life? Be prepared to be extra diligent and prayerful in those situations.
5. Get enough sleep! I’ve found that my mouth is much more likely to do damage when the rest of my body is tired. Obtaining the rest we need whenever possible may be one of the best antidotes to mouth mayhem.

But where do I get these words? Speaking whatever first pops into my mind does not usually get the results I want. Like Isaiah, I have to listen to God. I need to learn from the God who spoke the world into being. I need instruction from Jesus, who spoke mercy to the men pounding nails into His hands. I need to listen to the Holy Spirit, who gave the disciples life-changing words for those who did not know the Savior. In other words, I need the Word.

A Word of Forgiveness for Today

The Lord speaks words of forgiveness to me when I have failed. He whispers words of hope to me when I am weary, that I might speak the same for others.

Use Isaiah's experience to shape your words. Confess your unclean lips, and receive God's forgiveness. Offer your lips as a tool for God's use. Ask God to instruct your tongue and speak words that encourage those who are tired and weary.

You may not care about lip exfoliators. Fancy lip products may not appeal to you. Perhaps you do not wear lipstick. That's okay. But let's plan to wear shades of speech that are life-giving. Let's look for words that color our world with hope. Let's approach each day as an opportunity to speak God's words.

Think of how you can use your lips to positively transform your sphere of influence. Listen to God's words of comfort and grace to you and share them with the people in your life. Bless a store clerk. Encourage a friend whose shoulders are sagging. Share Christ's love with those who do not yet know Him.

Precious Jesus, I am anxious to begin a Mouth Make-over. I confess I have spoken insensitive and unkind words. Cleanse my mouth and make it fit for You. Thank You for Your exfoliator of grace and the opportunity to share Your love. Give me words to sustain the weary and tired people I see all around me. Here I am, send me! Amen.

DAY 5

Lipstick Lesson

1. Which of the five practical suggestions for a Mouth Makeover will you use this week? Record your plan to implement it here:

STEP 1
.....

2. LIP Study. Each week, we will closely examine one section of Scripture using a three-step process. This study style has made me a better student of the Bible. It has helped me to notice things in God's Word that I have previously missed, to pay attention to the details, and, most important, to hear God speak. You will read the passage three times each time looking for something new following the acronym LIP:

Look for the Facts

Interpret the Meaning

Pursue the Application

James, the brother of Jesus, had a lot to say about taming the tongue. Read James 3:1–10 and use the following study guide (I have done a few verses for you as examples):

Look for the facts. Don't make any interpretations here. Simply write what is happening in each verse.

Verse 1 Not many should become teachers.

Verse 2 We all stumble in many ways. A person who has no fault in what he says is perfect.

Verse 3 A small bit in a horse's mouth controls this large animal.

Verse 4 Large ships can be driven by a small rudder.

Verse 5 The tongue is capable of great boasts. A large fire can be started by a small spark.

Verse 6

Verse 7

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

Interpret the meaning. Turn the lesson in the passage into a scriptural principle. Example:

Verse 1 Teachers will be judged more strictly.

Verse 2 It is very difficult to control our words.

Verse 3 With the grace of God, we can bridle the tongue and change its course from harm to help.

Verse 4 Though the tongue is small, it can cause a great deal of good or a great deal of harm.

Verse 5 A small slip of the tongue can cause big problems.

Verse 6

Verse 7

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

Pursue the application. Turn the principle you discovered into a personal question that applies the truth to your life. Example:

Verse 1 If I want to be a teacher, am I willing to be held to a higher standard? Do I judge teachers more strictly?

Verse 2 Since it is so difficult to control my words, am I remembering to ask God for help?

Verse 3 How can I better bridle my tongue?

Verse 4 Do I recognize the effect my words have on the people in my life?

Verse 5 When have I experienced the negative effects of the tongue?

Verse 6

Verse 7

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

3. What key lesson did you learn today?

4. Write out Psalm 19:14 from memory.

STEP 1

Meaningful Makeover

Choose one question from those you posed in “Pursue the Application.” Answer it honestly and come up with an action you can do to grow in that area. For instance, in verse 2, I asked, “Since it is so difficult to control my words, am I remembering to ask God for help?” One way I can remind myself to remember to pray for God’s help with my words is to write out the prayer on page 31 and post the prayer on my mirror and computer.