

# Safeguarding Speech

**PodSeries - Vol 21**



**Achieve Noble Character**

# **Safeguarding Speech**

**ShaykhPod Books**

**Published by ShaykhPod Books, 2023**

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Safeguarding Speech

**First edition. May 5, 2023.**

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## **Acknowledgements**

All praises are for Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds, who has given us the inspiration, opportunity and strength to complete this volume. Blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad whose path has been chosen by Allah, the Exalted, for the salvation of mankind.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the entire ShaykhPod family, especially our little star, Yusuf, whose continued support and advice has inspired the development of ShaykhPod Books.

We pray that Allah, the Exalted, completes His favour on us and accepts each letter of this book in His august court and allows it to testify on our behalf on the Last Day.

All praise to Allah, the Exalted, Lord of the worlds and endless blessings and peace be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad, on his blessed Household and Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

## Compiler's Notes

We have tried diligently to do justice in this volume however if there are any short falls found then the compiler is personally and solely responsible for them.

We accept the possibility of faults and shortcomings in an effort to complete such a difficult task. We might have unconsciously stumbled and committed errors for which we ask for indulgence and forgiveness of our readers and the drawing of our attention thereto will be appreciated. We earnestly invite constructive suggestions which can be made to [ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com](mailto:ShaykhPod.Books@gmail.com).

## Introduction

In this day and age it has become a common and accepted practice to unleash one's tongue and use it in the incorrect way. The ultimate loser of this attitude is the speaker even if they obtain worldly things through this behaviour. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7482, warns that a person may utter a word which they deem insignificant but it will cause them to sink into Hell further than the distance between the east and west of this world. It is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3973, that words are the main cause of people entering Hell. It is clear from the Holy Quran that each word a person utters is recorded and they will be held accountable for it on the Day of Judgment. Chapter 50 Qaf, verse 18:

*“He [i.e., man] utters no word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].”*

This should make it clear to all the significance of the words they speak and the importance of constantly keeping their tongue in check. This is not possible to achieve without knowledge. Therefore, this book will discuss the different dangers of the tongue and how to avoid them.

## **Safeguarding Speech**

### **Types of Speech**

One should always remember that there are three types of speech. One should keep silent from the first type which is entirely harmful. The second type simply wastes time which will be a great regret on the Day of Judgment. This type is speech which is neither beneficial nor harmful. The last type one should engage in which is beneficial speech. According to this structure two thirds of speech should be removed from one's life.



## **Mind Your Business**

The first danger of the tongue is speaking about things which do not concern a person. A person who adopts this attitude will be deprived of their precious time. Everything can be bought except more time. Wasting time will be a great regret for a person in the hereafter when they observe the reward of those who utilized their time correctly. Even though, some things uttered by a person who does not mind their business is not sinful it is obvious they have lost out on using their time in a more productive way. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3976, that a person cannot perfect their Islam until they stay away from things which do not concern them.

The definition of speaking about something that does not concern a person is if a person chose to remain silent from this type of speech they will not be sinful nor cause any harm by their silence.

In reality, a person should not even speak about things which concern them unless it is at an appropriate time and place. Ignoring this advice only leads to trouble for the speaker and others.

Asking questions about things which do not concern one is a common problem found in society today. People often enquire about these sort of things and force others who desire to keep things private to either lie, avoid

answering directly through trickery or they ignore them which comes across rude. A muslim should be more considerate and only enquire about general things which do concern them.

Those who dedicate their speech to things which do not concern them will be deprived of speaking about things which do concern them. And those who truly direct their efforts on things which concern them will not find time to speak about things which do not concern them. The latter are the successful who utilized their tongue in the correct way.

If one truly reflected on all the arguments they have had they will realise the majority of them was caused by someone speaking about something which did not concern them. Imagine how many arguments could be avoided just by avoiding this attitude?



## **Unnecessary Speech**

The second danger of the tongue is extra unnecessary speech. In most cases, this is not regarded a sin. But as mentioned in the earlier chapter it will cause one to waste their precious time which will be great regret for them in the hereafter. In addition, extra speech usually leads to sinful speech, such as backbiting. One should bear in mind that their speech is in fact a letter which they write to Allah, the Exalted. It would be humiliating for a person to fill this letter up with excess words which are of no benefit to them or others in this world or in the next. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2408, that Allah, the Exalted, hates when people utter useless words. It is clear from many Hadiths that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, did not utter unnecessary words and showed a dislike for it. An example is recorded in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 211. Therefore, it is the duty of a muslim to avoid this trait.

## Arguing

The third danger of the tongue is arguing with others. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned Muslims not to dispute with others. This is advised in a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 394. In most cases, arguing and debating with others only causes enmity to grow between people. In fact, one very rarely accepts the truth through argumentation. It is important to understand, that there is a big difference between presenting the truth in a beautiful, kind and respectful manner and arguing with someone over it. This is why spreading the word of Islam should be left to those who have adopted the right characteristics. Arguing is disliked so much that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has promised, in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4800, a house in the outskirts of Paradise for the one who gives up arguing even when their opinion is correct. In fact, according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 3253, a person only strays from right guidance when they adopt an argumentative attitude. Chapter 43 Az Zukhruf, verse 58:

*“...They did not present it [i.e., the comparison] except for [mere] argument. But, [in fact], they are a people prone to dispute.”*

Constantly arguing even if it's over the truth can cause one to twist and misinterpret the evidence just to win a debate. This is evil as it not only misguides the doer but also those who are listening to the debate. A severe warning of the fire of Hell has been given in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn

Majah, number 254, to those who seek knowledge in order to make others look foolish through argumentation and debates.

In most cases, arguing is unnecessary and leads to further problems for everyone. It is better to ignore someone who utters falsehood instead of arguing with them as their very motive is to incite an argument. Those who adopt this mentality only desire to show off their knowledge and superiority which leads to the evil trait of pride. As confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265, a person with an atom's weight of pride in their heart will not enter Paradise.

To conclude, the one who adopts an argumentative attitude will never find peace of mind as they will be constantly fuming over those who challenge their opinions. If a person desires peace they should give up arguing.

## **Foul Language**

The next danger of the tongue is foul language. This habit is undoubtedly a sin. The one who is obscene and bad mouthed is hated by Allah, the Exalted. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2002. The one who angers Allah, the Exalted, is far away from His mercy and thus more susceptible to punishment in both worlds.

Foul language is speech which contradicts modesty and good manners. It includes swearing and using shameless language. Wherever possible one should reference something indirectly rather than using shameless language.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1977, that a true believer does not utter foul words. So the one who makes this their habit should review their faith and sincerely repent from this evil trait. In fact, using foul language has been indicated as a branch of hypocrisy by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2027.

Replying to a shameless person is foolish and only leads to sins. For example, a person commits a major sin when they abuse their own parents. According to a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 5973, this occurs when a person abuses another person's parents and the latter in response abuses their parents.

A muslim should strive to purify their tongue by only uttering sensible words otherwise they may speak a foul word which causes them to sink into Hell greater than the distance between the east and west of this world. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 7481.



## Cursing

The next danger of the tongue is

Cursing is when one supplicates for the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, to be removed from something or someone else. Only Allah, the Exalted, is aware of who deserves to be cursed and deprived of His mercy. Therefore, one should avoid this foolish habit. Cursing someone who does not deserve it is a foul act and the one who desires the mercy of Allah, the Exalted, to be removed from someone else may find that it is removed from them instead. In fact, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has made it clear in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2019, that a true believer does not curse. The Muslims who have the habit of cursing are so disliked by Allah, the Exalted, that they will be deprived of being witnesses and intercessors on the Day of Judgment. Allah, the Exalted, will dislike showing them off to the rest of creation on the Last Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6610.

Finally, a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6652, highlights the severity of cursing a believer. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, declared that cursing a believer is like killing them.

Even if one deserves to be cursed it is safer and wiser to abstain and instead utter words which will please Allah, the Exalted, such as His remembrance.

## **Joking**

The next danger of the tongue is joking. In a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2315, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, cursed three times the one who lies in order to make people laugh.

Joking while sticking to the truth is not a sin but it is difficult to do consistently. The one who jokes excessively will eventually slip up and utter words which are sinful, such as lying, backbiting or mocking others. Therefore, it is safer to avoid joking excessively which has been advised in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1995. In addition, the one who jokes excessively even if they manage to always speak the truth and not offend anyone will encounter a spiritual disease which has been warned of in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 4193, namely, a spiritually dead heart. This occurs to the person who jokes and laughs excessively as this mentality demands they always think and discuss funny issues and avoid serious issues. The matter of preparing for death and the hereafter are serious issues and if one avoids thinking and discussing them they will never correctly prepare for them. This lack of preparation will cause their spiritual heart to die. In fact, the more seriously one ponders over the hereafter the less they will laugh and joke. This is indicated in a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6486.

Joking too often also causes others to lose respect for them. This can cause many problems such as, not being taken seriously when they command good and forbid evil even if it is to their own children.

Excessively joking often leads to enmity between people as one can easily take things seriously. This leads to fractured and broken relationships. Many people have even become physically and emotionally hurt because of jokes.

In addition, when joking one should avoid laughing loudly or full mouthed as this is disliked in Islam. The Holy Prophet Muhammad's, peace and blessings be upon him, laugh was a smile according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 6092.

A muslim should avoid lying at all costs even when joking as this would lead to them to obtaining a house in the middle of Paradise. This is confirmed in Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4800.

This does not mean a muslim should not joke at all. Joking from time to time while avoiding other sins, such as lying, is acceptable as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, occasionally

joked. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1990. It is joking excessively which is disliked and sinful if it is related to a sin. It is a sin to intentionally misinterpret a tradition of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, in order to fulfil one's own desires. If the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, rarely joked without committing any sins attached to it then muslims should do the same and not exceed the bounds in order to fulfil their own desires.

In addition, there is a big difference between being cheerful with people, such as smiling, and joking excessively. Being cheerful is a blessing of Allah, the Exalted, according to a Hadith found in Imam Bukhari's, Adab Al Mufrad, number 301. Even smiling to make others feel comfortable is recorded as an act of charity according to a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1970. So one should not believe avoiding joking excessively means that people should always be in a sad and depressed mood.

## Mocking Others

The next danger of the tongue is mocking others.

Mocking others occurs when one ridicules and highlights the defects of another in order to cause others to laugh and look down at them. This can be done through actions or words. In most cases, this is a sin as it involves degrading and insulting others. It is not a sin if the feelings of the one being mocked do not change negatively and when sinful words are not used. This is extremely rare especially, in this day and age. Mocking has been prohibited by Allah, the Exalted. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 11:

*“O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames...”*

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2505, that whoever mocks another over a sin the latter has repented from will not die until they commit the same sin. It is important for muslims to avoid this characteristic as it in most cases creates enmity between people and this always leads to fractured or broken relationships.

## **False Promises**

The next danger of the tongue is making false promises. The one who makes a false promise has the intention to break it which is a sin as it is a branch of hypocrisy according to Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2749. A Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 213, adds that the person who behaves in such a manner has adopted an aspect of hypocrisy even if they pray, fast and claim to be a muslim. The Holy Quran has made it clear all promises must be made with the intention to fulfil them. Chapter 5 Al Ma'idah, verse 1:

*“O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts...”*

There is no sin on the one who fully intends to fulfil their promise but is prevented from it for some valid reason. Muslims should strive not to adopt this aspect of hypocrisy otherwise they may well be judged like one on Judgment Day.

A muslim should never act in a way which displeases Allah, the Exalted, even if it contradicts their desires or oaths. Unfortunately, some muslims are extremely stubborn when it comes to keeping their word even if it leads to the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted. For example, they may break ties with others over petty reasons and refuse to change because of a silly oath they have made. This only leads to enmity and fractured relationships.

A Hadith found in Sunan An Nasai, number 3876, warns muslims not to fulfill their oaths in ways which displease Allah, the Exalted, as this oath is only for the Devil. A muslim should never be steadfast on the disobedience of Allah, the Exalted, as this is only stubbornness and has no part in Islam. A muslim should instead be steadfast in the obedience of Allah, the Exalted, by fulfilling His commands, refraining from His prohibitions and by facing destiny with patience according to the traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This is true steadfastness and leads to the mercy of Allah, the Exalted.

The following verse excuses those who do not intend to make oaths in their speech. In addition, this verse reminds muslims of the foundation of Islam namely, one's intention. This is what every action is judged on and it will lead one to Hell or Paradise on Judgment Day. Chapter 2 Al Baqarah, verse 225:

*“Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned...”*

But none the less, a muslim should not get into this habit as it is disliked in Islam as it leads to trouble in both worlds.

## **Lying**

The next danger of the tongue is probably the most common sin committed with the tongue namely, lying. Lying is unacceptable whether it is a small lie which is often called a white lie or when one lies as a joke. All of these types of lies are forbidden. In fact, the one who lies to make people laugh, so their aim is not to deceive someone, has been cursed three times in one Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 2315.

Another popular lie people often speak believing it is not a sin is when they lie to children. This is undoubtedly a sin according to Hadiths such as the one found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4991. It is plain foolishness to lie to children as they will only adopt this sinful habit from the elder who lies to them. Behaving in this manner shows children lying is acceptable when it is not acceptable according to the teachings of Islam. Only in very rare and extreme cases is lying acceptable for example, lying in order to protect the life of an innocent person.



It is vital to avoid lying as according to one Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1971, it leads to other sins such as backbiting and mocking people. This behaviour leads one to the gates of Hell. When a person continues to lie they are recorded by Allah, the Exalted, as a great liar. It does not take a scholar to predict what will happen to a person on Judgment day who has been recorded by Allah, the Exalted, as a great liar.

All muslims desire the company of the Angels yet when a person lies they are deprived of their company. In fact, the stench that is omitted from the mouth of a liar causes the Angels to move a mile away from them. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Jami At Tirmidhi, number 1972.

Telling lies which spread to others in society is a such a serious sin that according to a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 7047, if a person does this and fails to repent they will be punished after their death to such an extent that an iron hook will be placed in their mouth and their facial skin will be torn off. Their face will regenerate instantly and the process will then be repeated. This will continuously occur until the Day of Judgment.

To conclude, all muslims should avoid all forms of lying irrespective of who they are conversing with.

## **Backbiting and Slander**

The next dangers of the tongue are sins which occur far too often in society in this day and age namely, backbiting and slander. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6593, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, explained the meaning of backbiting and slander.

Backbiting is when one criticizes someone behind their back in a way which would be displeasing to them even though it is the truth. Whereas, slander is similar to backbiting except that the statement is not true. These sins mainly involve speech but can include other things, such as using hand signals. Backbiting is a major sin and has been compared to eating the flesh of a dead corpse in the Holy Quran. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 12:

*“...And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it...”*

It is important to understand that this sin is worse than most of the sins which are between a person and Allah, the Exalted. This is because the sins between a person and Allah, the Exalted, will be forgiven by Him if the sinner sincerely repents. But Allah, the Exalted, will not forgive a backbiter until their victim forgives them first. If they do not then on Judgment Day the good deeds of the backbiter will be given to their victim as compensation and if needed the sins of the victim will be given to their backbiter until justice is established. This may well cause the backbiter to be hurled into Hell. This has confirmed in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 6579.

The only times backbiting is lawful is if one is warning and protecting another person of unlawful harm or if a person is resolving a complaint against another with a third party, such as a legal case.

One should avoid backbiting and slandering by firstly gaining knowledge on the evil consequences of these major sins. Secondly, a person should only utter words which they would happily say in front of the person full well knowing they would not take it in an offensive way. Thirdly, a muslim should only utter words about another if they would not mind someone else saying those or similar words about them. Meaning, they should talk about others how they want people to talk about them. Finally, a muslim should

concentrate on fixing their own faults and when done sincerely it will prevent them from backbiting and slandering others.

## Tale Bearing

The next danger of the tongue is spreading malicious gossip meaning, tale bearing. In a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 290, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned that the one who spreads malicious gossip will not enter Paradise.

This is the one who spreads gossip whether it is true or not and it leads to problems between people, fractured and broken relationships. This is an evil characteristic and those who behave in such a manner are in fact human devils as this mentality belongs to none other than the Devil. He always strives to cause separation between people. Allah, the Exalted has cursed this type of person in the Holy Quran. Chapter 104 Al Humazah, verse 1:

*“Woe to every backbiter, slanderer”*

How can one expect Allah, the Exalted, to fix their problems and bestow them with blessings if this curse has surrounded them? The only time tale bearing is acceptable is when one is warning others of a danger.

It is a duty on a muslim not to pay any attention to a tale bearer as they are wicked people who should not be trusted or believed. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 6:

*“O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance...”*

A muslim should forbid the tale bearer from continuing with this evil characteristic and urge them to sincerely repent. As commanded in the Holy Quran a muslim should not harbour any ill will against the person that supposedly said something bad about them. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 12:

*“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin...”*

This same verse teaches muslims not to try to prove or disprove the tale bearer by spying on others. Chapter 49 Al Hujurat, verse 12:

*“...And do not spy...”*

Instead the tale bearer should be ignored. A muslim should not mention the information given to them by the tale bearer to another person or mention the tale bearer as this would make them a tale bearer as well.

Muslims should avoid tale bearing and the company of tale bearers as they can never be worthy of trust or companionship until they sincerely repent.

## **Two-Faced**

The next danger of the tongue is being two-faced. This is when a person changes their behaviour depending on who they are interacting with in order to please them so that they gain worldly things, such as respect and fame. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has warned in a Hadith found in Sunan Abu Dawud, number 4873, that whoever adopts a two faced mentality will have two tongues of fire on the Day of Judgment. It is the duty of a muslim to remain honest and consistent in their speech and actions and only seek the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted in all their activities. The one who behaves in this manner will be protected by Allah, the Exalted, from any long-term negative effects which can result from being consistently honest. But the one who follows the path of the hypocrites will lose out on the mercy and protection of Allah, the Exalted, so that they are left to wander blindly in misguidance. Allah, the Exalted, will ensure that, sooner or later, their evil intentions are exposed to the people they aim to please so that they lose out on obtaining worldly blessings and become loathed by their society. This worldly punishment is small compared to the punishment reserved for them in the hereafter unless they sincerely repent.



## **Over Praising**

The final danger of the tongue is over praising people. In a Hadith found in Sahih Bukhari, number 2662, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, warned against over praising others.

This is a disliked deed as it firstly can be sinful if the praise is based on falsehood. Even if it is true over praising people especially, the ignorant can cause them to become proud. This is an evil characteristic as an atom's worth of it is enough to take one to Hell. This has been warned in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 265. Over praising can even cause the praised person to believe they have fulfilled their potential in obeying Allah, the Exalted, and therefore do not need to improve on it.

A muslim should not be fooled by the praise of others as they know their actions and inner hidden character better than any other person. Reflecting on this and the countless times Allah, the Exalted, has concealed their faults from people should prevent them from becoming proud. In addition, they should remember that the praised quality they possess was granted to them by none other than Allah, the Exalted, therefore all praise belongs to Him. Finally, a muslim should become more grateful to Allah, the Exalted, by using the blessings they possess in ways pleasing to Him. They should instead advise others about this Hadith and warn them not to over praise others.

Only in certain cases is praising others acceptable and must include not over praising them, sticking with the truth and it should be done in order to encourage them to do more good. This especially applies to children such as praising them in respect to their school work, good behaviour and fulfilling the duties of Islam.

## **Conclusion**

It has been made clear that there are numerous dangers of the tongue. Therefore, it is vital for muslims to be constantly aware of what they say as it only takes a single word to cause them to plummet into Hell on Judgement Day. This is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 3970. It is important that a person thinks before speaking and only proceeds when the words will not be sinful or vain. This is the sign of an intelligent person. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, has advised in a Hadith found in Sahih Muslim, number 176, a way for a muslim to escape all the dangers of the tongue namely, to either speak good or remain silent. Gaining knowledge on the dangers of the tongue will enforce this teaching. But if a muslim remains ignorant they will commit many sins through their words without even realising it. This is why gaining knowledge has been made a duty on all muslims which is confirmed in a Hadith found in Sunan Ibn Majah, number 224.

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