

# On Keeping Quiet.

by J.R. Miller

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing when to speak and when to keep quiet, learning from Jesus' example of silence under various circumstances.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 17:28, Ecclesiastes 3:7, Matthew 12:36, James 1:19

**Topics:** "Silence", "Mastery of Speech"

---

## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of knowing when to speak and when to remain silent, drawing from Ecclesiastes 3:7. He highlights that while speech can be powerful and beneficial, there are moments when silence is more appropriate and even necessary, especially in the presence of grief or injustice. Miller reflects on the example of Jesus, who often chose silence over words, teaching us that self-discipline and divine help are essential in mastering our speech. He warns against the dangers of hasty words that can cause irreparable harm and encourages believers to seek God's guidance in their communication. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a balance between speaking and silence, urging us to listen for God's voice before we speak.

---

## Transcript

"There is a time to keep silence -- and a time to speak" Ecclesiastes 3:7

Talking is good -- if it is wholesome talking. Very wonderful is the gift of speech, and the power of good words to do good is simply incalculable. But not all talking is good; there are words that are firebrands or daggers! We are responsible, too, for using our tongue. An old proverb tells us that, while speech is silver -- silence is golden. Of course the saying says too much. There are times when silence is not golden, is in fact only base alloy, and when duty can be done only by speaking. We have no right to keep our gentle thoughts and feelings in our heart unexpressed -- when loved ones are starving for words of affection.

Nevertheless, it is oftentimes our duty to be silent. There are times when silence is indeed golden, and when speech is only silver, or even poor dross. It is a good thing to know when to speak -- and when not to speak. Some people talk altogether too much. They chatter on forever. Nothing ever awes them into silence. Silence is better far than idle, sinful, or foolish speech.

One tells of standing before a great picture -- a picture representing one of the most tender and sacred scenes in the life of Christ. There was everything in the occasion to produce reverence, almost awe. The little group that stood before the picture with uncovered heads were deeply impressed, and spoke, if at all,

only to give expression in whispered words to the emotion which possessed them. But in the midst of this worshipful hush, there came in another group of visitors. The picture had no subduing effect upon them. They talked on in careless mood, speaking of the mere incidentals of the great work of art, evidently without any perception of the real meaning of the painting, or of any of the scenes which it portrayed.

This was an occasion when speech was not only impertinent, trivial, and out of place -- but was also irreverent, undevout, and when silence was the only fitting expression of the thoughtful heart.

We may learn much from our Master's example about the duty of silence. No other man ever spoke as he did, such marvelous words, such words of power; but in the Gospel story, the silences of Jesus are quite as wonderful as his words. There were thirty silent years at the beginning, out of which only one single sentence is preserved to us. The silence of those years is wonderfully impressive.

We urge young Christian people in these days to be always talking, telling their experiences, witnessing to their love for Christ; we insist that they shall let no meeting pass without "a little word for Jesus." But Jesus himself, with a heart full of love for God and a mind teeming with holy thoughts which he was eager to express, waited thirty years in silence before he began to speak. Perhaps we talk too much about our religion. Perhaps it were better if we waited longer and mused in silence, while the fire burns, until we can speak more wisely and with more power. Then what we say would be something worthwhile.

There were times, too, when Jesus was silent in the presence of human need and distress. It seems strange to us, as we read the records, that he did not speak when words would have given such comfort and relief. But no doubt silence was better than speech -- or he would have spoken. There are times when kindly words would better be restrained, when even love may be too tender. There are times when we would do our friends harm, if we were to lift away or even lighten their burden; because the blessing they need is in the burden, and to remove it would be to rob them of God's gift in it.

Many people talk too much, too, when they find their friends in sorrow. They want to express sympathy; and they think they must go over all the details of the grief with them, and then must expound to them the comforts of the Bible. But there are few places where many words are more unfit, than in the presence of grief. A warm pressure of the hand, a word or two of strong sympathy, and a quiet heart's prayer to God for help, will give the truest comfort.

We get from our Master also, the lesson of silence under injury or wrong. That is what meekness is -- not answering back, not contending for one's rights, not striving against injustice, not resisting insult -- but quietly submitting and enduring. Over and over we see Jesus bearing reproaches and injuries in sweet silence. He kept silent about Judas, while the treason was ripening. He was silent on his trial -- reviled, but not reviling in return. On his cross he spoke no word of bitterness or of complaint. While the nails were being driven into his hands and feet, his only word was a prayer for those who were causing him such anguish.

It is hard to keep quiet when others say bitter or false things to us, or about us, or when we are suffering wrongfully. But silence is always better than words in such experiences. If we speak at all, when smarting under a sense of personal injury, we are almost sure to say words we would better not have said. Anger is a kind of temporary insanity. A furious man is a madman. We pity the dumb -- but dumbness is safer and better than ungoverned speech which works havoc all about.

"I hastily opened my lips

And uttered a word of disdain

That wounded a friend and forever estranged

A heart I would die to regain!"

One of the sad things about ill-timed words is that they cannot be recalled. Flowers fade -- but there will be more blossoms. Snow melts -- but it will snow again. You may weep over the unkind thing you said which so stung your friend's heart, and your friend may never speak of it to you, nor show in any way that he even remembers it -- but the word itself never can be recalled.

Surely it is "a time to keep silence", when we are under the pressure of any sense of wrong or injustice, for if we speak then our words will have a sting in them, and an hour later we shall be sure to regret that we spoke at all.

The Bible has much to say about keeping quiet -- but how may we learn the lesson? Tongue-mastery is not easy. We are assured that even wild beasts are more easily tamed than the human tongue. Yet the tongue is not utterly untamable. The lesson of keeping silence can be learned; and we should never be content until we have learned to be quiet, not speaking, even under the keenest provocation. How can we learn the lesson?

Self-discipline is important. We must watch ourselves. We must get the mastery over our own life. We must bring our tongue into subjection, so that it will speak or be silent as we bid it.

But we need divine help. Christ overcame the world, and he is able to overcome every power of evil. There is a secret of Christian faith by which we may put our whole life into Christ's keeping: If we would only wait for him to speak in our words -- we would often be silent where now we chatter endlessly.

If we keep quiet and still, God will speak to us at the right time. Then, unless the voice of gentle stillness speaks in us, we would better be silent. Divinely inspired silences, are better far than any human words we could speak.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/on-keeping-quiet/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**