



Keep It Shut: What to Say, How to Say It, and When to Say Nothing at All

Karen Ehman

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Keep It Shut by Karen Ehman explores how to better control your tongue, knowing what to say and how to say it, and realizing when it is best to say nothing at all.

From Bible times to modern times women have struggled with their words. What to say and how to say it. What not to say. When it is best to remain silent. And what to do when you've said something you wish you could now take back. In this book a woman whose mouth has gotten her into loads of trouble shares the hows (and how-not-tos) of dealing with the tongue.

Beyond just a "how not to gossip" book, this book explores what the Bible says about the many ways we are to use our words and the times when we are to remain silent. Karen will cover using our speech to interact with friends, co-workers, family, and strangers as well as in the many places we use our words in private, in public, online, and in prayer. Even the words we say silently to ourselves. She will address unsolicited opinion-slinging, speaking the truth in love, not saying words just to people-please, and dealing with our verbal anger.

Christian women struggle with their mouths. Even though we know that Scripture has much to say about how we are—and are not—to use our words, this is still an immense issue, causing heartache and strain not only in family relationships, but also in friendships, work, and church settings.

Keep It Shut: What to Say, How to Say It, and When to Say Nothing at All Details

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Agni B says

I didn't realize this book was targeted at a demographic of Christian females (i.e. far outside my demographic). Nonetheless I managed to finish this book, and it contained valuable insights about when to speak vs stay quiet, how to speak to different groups of people by keeping their background in mind, and finally - a favorite of mine - the use of strategic ellipses in speech to maximize effectiveness and delivery. The author, incidentally, advocates a Dale Carnegie-esque approach to criticism by stating that one should never criticize another openly or behind their back. Finally, it's important to note that this book bolsters its assertions with many biblical references, which were structured in a manner that they were approachable to a reader who has never read the bible.

Hope Miller says

Keep It Shut is a good book to read when you feel that you struggle to control your tongue in a godly way. It's full of helpful tips and tricks and definitely gives you some things to take into account while you speak to others as a representative of Christ. The stories that the author uses to illustrate key points can tend to drag on a bit, but other than that it's a good read.

Theresa Diulus says

If you're someone who has ever said something that you later regret to a friend at lunch or in passing to another parent dropping a child off at school or in a clipped voice to that child while dropping them off at school, then reading this book from Karen Ehman will be giving yourself (and anyone you come in contact with!) a huge gift of wisdom and grace. Her words flow from her heart and offer such great tools as "Top Ten Verses To Watch Your Words" and in keeping with today's social media "Proverbs' Top Ten "Tweets" On The Tongue." This book will make you feel as though you are having a conversation with your grandma/mom/best friend so pour a cup of your favorite beverage and curl up in your favorite reading place and enjoy "Keep It Shut."

Michele Morin says

Whether you enter every room mouth-first or just struggle with an angry outburst from time to time;

Whether you habitually turn the prayer chain into a gossip group or just lapse occasionally into insecurity-fed flattery;

Wherever you fall on the sliding continuum of the blab-o-meter, you've undoubtedly wished, at some point in your life, when it comes to your mouth, that you could just Keep It Shut!

Karen Ehman has earned the right to issue a stern warning concerning the use of words by transparently

sharing her own history of open-mouth-insert-foot. Grounded in Scripture, *Keep It Shut* confirms that a problem with the mouth begins in the mind and in the heart. Gracious words spring from a heart that is “laced with grace,” a quality that comes straight from God who kindly sets the example with His ultimate compassion. To reinforce the influence of the mind over the mouth, Karen has compiled a collection of Scripture verses on the right use of words which can be photocopied for memorization and meditation.

Don't be fooled by the old standard, “Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?” because even if your comment passes the truth test, motives count, and they are “weighed by the Lord” (Proverbs 16:2). Among the many helpful check-lists in the book is a list of questions for examining motives before speaking.

In the digital age, our fingers can do the talking for us, making it even more urgent that we recognize when it's time to be quiet. In fact, one of the most thoughtful suggestions in this very practical book deals with confidentiality. When handling a particularly sensitive issue involving a friend, Karen texted the reassurance that she would not be talking about the situation to anyone other than God, and then reminded her friend that she was praying and available if needed. As difficult as it may be for a “talker” to imagine, sometimes the most helpful thing a friend can say is nothing.

However, godly speech is not an excuse for wimping out when there is hard truth that needs saying. Instead, she who would speak the truth in love “must find the fulcrum — the pivot point that balances gentle honesty with hard truth enveloped in love.” The truth is that death to self is the only antidote to “angry mama mouth,” and it is the only fire extinguisher for the flames caused by “the gasoline queen.” “See in it a chance to die,” said Amy Carmichael whenever one of her orphanage staff complained about the cost of discipleship, and a costly discipleship it is when a natural -born talker has to weigh the impact of all those words.

Used rightly, however, words are a gift, and *Keep It Shut* ends on a blessedly positive note with many suggestions for using words to build up and not to tear down. I have already recorded one of Karen's ideas in my planner for use during Lent, and her final chapter and appendices beautifully capture the challenge of any spiritual discipline. There is the old behavior which needs to be cast off, and there is the new Christ-exalting behavior which, by the Spirit, we are empowered to put on. In maintaining a mouth that glorifies God, not only must we be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” We must also be quick to use “gracious words [which] are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Disclosure: This book was provided by BookLookBloggers in exchange for my unbiased review.

Amanda Geaney (Christian Shelf-Esteem) says

To the outside world, strangers, and casual acquaintances, I am not a talkative person. The complete opposite is true with those whom I feel most comfortable with - my family, friends, and bible study ladies.

Unfortunately, if you spend enough time in my inner circle you are bound to hear a few un-christian things spill from my lips. One such occasion happened three years ago and to this day that relationship has not fully recovered. If your words have ever bested you, if you've ever spoken without thinking, reacted out of anger, commented when you should have held your peace, or pounced on an opportunity to get a dig in (that should cover most of you)...then this book is for you.

In order to benefit fully from Karen Ehman's book *Keep It Shut: What To Say, How To Say It, And When To Say Nothing At All*, you must be willing to undergo a little self-examination. Karen tells of her own tongue-taming battle before sharing biblical lessons from Joseph, Daniel, and even King Herod. Each story

lends itself to an invaluable piece of advice that we can apply to our own conversations. Readers are asked to evaluate their daily intake of the Word (Luke 6:45), our motives for speaking, and our skills as listeners. Some of her best advice pertains to when to hold our tongue, what to share and what is gossip, and how to defuse heated verbal exchanges.

My copy of Keep It Shut is full of post-it flags marking quotations and tips I want to return to. The advice is biblically based, socially relevant, and has the potential to prevent future speech faux pas when you put them into practice. Women speak more words in a day than men (that's a fact), so it stands to reason that women may need more help learning what to say, how to say it, and when to zip it! For this reason I highly recommend this book to Women's Ministry groups and book clubs to read and discuss together. Ladies (and gentlemen) this book may be just what you need to improve the emotional climate in your home, to open the lines of communication in your family, and to prevent future meltdowns. I give Keep It Shut 5/5 stars.

I received this book free as a member of the BookLookBloggers review program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Louisa Black says

Excellent book.

I've spent my whole teens and early twenties yakking away about everything and nothing. I then spend a serious amount of time in my late twenties regretting EVERY single word uttered that I should not have said, not only did I have regrets but shed a few tears.

How wonderful it was to read a book by an author that was more honest and open than I would have been [I would have been a coward to admit to some things] but ever so grateful to her as at the time it felt like I was the only one with 'foot in mouth' disease.

I can't tell you how much I identified with a lot of what she was saying and just felt relieved that there was someone writing about this topic that understood how I felt. I do love non-fiction books. Not to make me feel better but to feel as though I'm not alone.

This books provides great antidotes, reflections and way's to move forward and let go but not to repeat past mistakes. It is also a book that does not judge or condemn you but feels like sitting with a friend, a good one.

I'm glad to add, I learnt a lot through those early years, that in my early thirties now, I am no where near where I use to be but sadly nowhere near perfect, but I won't give up keeping my mouth shut and some opinions to myself.

As my Mum says 'If you ain't got nothing nice to say, don't say anything at all.'

Danica Henry says

DNF. She makes the mistake of saying "like the apostle John says", and then quoting from the Sermon on the Mount. Her biblical illustrations are the definition of eisegesis. It's really too bad because I was looking forward to this book.

Read *The Peacemaker* or *Peacemaking* for families instead.

I'm learning that good books written specifically for Christian women are few and far between. And anything recommended by Lysa Terkeurst is NOT for me.

Heidi says

This is a great book about all the trouble our tongues can get us into and how to avoid each type. It is filled with great stories and it is easy to find yourself among the pages. I am so glad to have read this book. I learned quite a bit and also found out ways I get myself into trouble without trying. Great read!

Abigail says

I think "Keep it Shut" has several good tips and tricks for taming your tongue, as well as Biblical references and examples. But I also think Karen could have used some of her own advise in writing this book (a little too many personal stories, if you ask me).

I still thought it was worth reading and there were several 'note worthy' points.

Sydney (?????) says

It took me much longer to read this book than it should have!

This was written by a rather well-known author, as far as Christian women authors go; so, she has experience writing and making personal stories relevant.

The first few chapters of this book made me question its popularity, as it was a bit - stereotypical of women's books (ie: very chatty, very emotional). However, it does pick up in the middle; and the last few chapters were by far my favorite. She really uses her life as a step-by-step guide of what to do and what not to do (which takes courage). She lays everything out for you to see, which means you will either judge her for her decisions, or do what she did, and learn from them when you compare your own. (Ouch).

As a side note: I also bought the workbook (accidentally), which should have come with a DVD, but it didn't. (When you order online, beware). However, you can use the book and the workbook together; but, the workbook was meant to be used with the specific DVD... so, some of the workbook questions become irrelevant when you aren't watching the video. ;_ ; The workbook is also laid out with the intent that you will be using it in small groups, so it can be a little dry if you are the only person participating. (Bible study for one, please).

All this being said, I would recommend it. It was an easy read and it was cute. She does have that mother-esque feel of Betty Crocker as she writes and it's comforting. You could beef up the use of the Bible (she doesn't use James like you think she would!), but for someone (such as myself) struggling to get a hold of 'thine tongue', it's a good starting point! X

Rachel B says

The topic (watching our speech carefully) is one that each of us needs wisdom on, and I really appreciated Ehman's humor and transparency throughout the book. She told a few stories of instances where she was hurt by someone else's careless words, but mostly she shared experiences of her own failings. It was very refreshing to hear someone speak *humbly* in a Christian book.

I did feel that it could have been pared down just a teensy bit, and she quotes a LOT of scripture. I hate to write that as if it's a negative, but sometimes the verses she quoted were so similar (lots from Proverbs) that it seemed a little choppy, and I think certain points could have been better driven home by sticking just to one or two main verses per chapter/topic.

Overall, though, it was a good book containing lots of wise words and practical, helpful advice!

Bskinner says

An excellent book of practical, Biblically-based advice.

Linda says

I found this book/study to be too light. I did the video, et al. The opening story about an incident in middle school was a folksy, down home kind of opening. I had high hopes, but I never felt like there was real depth to the study. If you are just looking for a light study, then this is for you, but if you are looking to really go deep and deepen your relationship with Jesus, then this may not be satisfying.

Laura says

I read this book with a small group "bible" study this year. I am glad we read it so slowly because it gave me more time to actually absorb the basic theme of this book: what to say, how to say it, and when to say nothing at all. I found this book to be a very simple and quick read. There really were not very many biblical examples, it was mostly composed of Ehman's personal experiences that she shared to get her points across. Simple, honest, encouraging and gentle wisdom in controlling our tongues.

Mark says

While this book is meant for women, I think we all have trouble with this subject. A lot of it is nothing new you haven't heard in other books on the subject. I do enjoy the scriptures which relate to each area though. It helps when studying or living out those areas in your life.
