

USING YOUR VOICE

As women, we can use our God-given verbal skills to serve others and to glorify God's name.. However, many of us are hesitant to use this gift in our community and at work. Below are 10 tips on using your voice.

1. **USE TACT AND DIPLOMACY** when talking to others. Use a respectful tone and find commonality in a conversation even if you don't entirely agree. For example, *"That was an interesting thought that you shared, I agree (state what you agree with). One of the things that I have been thinking about is (add your different perspective)."* Scripture reminds us that our words have the power of life and death (Prov. 18:21).
2. **DISPLAY CONFIDENCE** by standing up straight, shoulders back and down and making eye contact with people in the room. Otherwise, look confident, even if you are not feeling it. Lower the register of your voice, speak slowly and project your voice so others can hear.
3. **START WITH A POSITIVE**, not a negative statement. For example, *"I appreciate the perspective that you shared, one of the things that I am thinking about..."* or *"I love the vigorous give and take we are having."* Avoid the negative such as, *"You probably won't agree..."* or *"You may think this is silly..."*
4. **KNOW THE FACTS**, be ready to answer questions, and expect some people to disagree with your perspective. If it is an important decision, you want disagreement (based on facts), so that you can come to the right decision.
5. **BE CLEAR AND CONCISE**, using as few as words as possible. This becomes especially important if you are in mixed company because most men do not like to listen to as much verbal detail as we women.
6. **ENCOURAGE OTHER WOMEN TO SPEAK** by asking them questions. Refer back to one of the ideas a woman has made, giving her credit for the idea. Or if she has spoken, ask her opinion.
7. **TAKE CREDIT FOR YOUR IDEAS** when someone repeats your idea and doesn't give you credit. Tactfully speak up and reclaim your idea, *"Thanks for referring to the idea I mentioned a couple of minutes ago. I think it will work, and I appreciate your support."*
8. **DON'T GET RATTLED** if someone disagrees with you. Thank the person for sharing his/her insight, ask some clarifying questions, and give thought to what was said. This doesn't mean you back down from your position. However, if the other person is right acknowledge it. It takes a strong person to see the value in another person's opinion.
9. **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE** when you have a difficult time verbally sharing with others. Each day find a way to speak up. Begin by practicing in front of a mirror and then share your thoughts with friends and family. As you become more confident start speaking up at meetings; at first this may be by merely agreeing with another person.
10. **GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A VOICE, AND HE EXPECTS YOU TO USE IT.** There is only one of you, with your particular perspective, so use your voice to serve others.

