

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

2 – Manage Your Mouth

“As for those who try to make
your life a misery,
bless them.
Don’t curse, bless.”
- Romans 12:14, J. B. PHILLIPS

“For out of the overflow of
the heart the mouth speaks.”
Matthew 12:34

The first principle in building great relationships involves taking the right approach—learning to respond rather than react. The scripture says, “*Don’t let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good*” (Romans 12:21). It’s not surprising then, that the next principle has to do with the way in which we use our mouths. In a sense, we carry two buckets around with us, one filled with gasoline and the other with water. Our words can either exasperate problems or extinguish them, depending upon what bucket we choose to throw. Are you known more for your *blessings* or your *blasts*?

Welcome

Are you the type of person who thinks first, then talks? Or do you speak before thinking? What’s one of your best known bloopers?

Word

Read Romans 12:14

1. What is your first inclination when someone wrongs you? What are the various ways in which one might “curse” another person? By contrast, what does it mean to “bless” someone?

Read James 3:1-12

2. James uses some vivid imagery to describe the tongue’s power (verses 3-6). What does each of the three illustrations in this passage—a *horse’s bit*, a *ship’s rudder*, a *fire’s spark*—reveal about why it’s important to manage your mouth?
3. Our speech can be so inconsistent—one moment we’re speaking *lovingly* and the next moment we’re *lashing* out at someone. How can this be? What’s the real problem with the tongue, according to James (verses 11-12, and notice Matthew 12:34)?
4. *Sure, your brain has a lot to do with choosing words. But how we use words is usually a reflection of what’s going on in our hearts.* Given this reality, what can you do that would allow God to change the condition of your heart (consider passages like James 1:5-8, 19; Ephesians 4:29)?
5. God wants us to use words to help people, to build them up, to meet their needs. In what relationship would you find this most challenging at the moment? Why?

Works

Don’t talk with your mouth full! Talk with your heart full of godly things. Mouth management actually begins with heart management. What direction is your mouth leading you at the moment? Ask God to clean up what’s inside so your words will be encouraging and helpful to others: “*Lord, help me control my tongue; help me be careful about what I say*” (Ps. 141:3).

Worship

Read **Psalm 34:1-3** and spend the remainder of your time praising God together: “I Will Bless the Lord at all Times” (237), “I Stand in Awe” (96), “Listen to Our Hearts” (810), “O Worship the King.”