

June 10-14, 2024 Edition

Following
The Year_(s) Of Jesus Part 128
Watch Your Mouth

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well yuo knew the rest ;D) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

MONDAY REFLECTION:

"This soup is too hot."

"I'm so tired."

"The WiFi isn't working!"

Complaining. We all do it. It's kind of a thing. We know exactly how blessed we are and we still complain. Heck, we even know we're doing it. Ever look up #firstworldproblems? Here's how Huffington Post explains it:

"Here is a whine - 'Ugh, I'm sick again.'

And here is a firstworldproblems-Whine - 'Ugh, every time I go to Paris I get sick.'"

#firstworldproblems, otherwise known as whining, is defined as, "a slang term used to refer to issues in First World nations that are complained about only because of the absence of more pressing concerns." I think we can just call it being human.

Complaining... like any other annoying habit... is no surprise to God. Remember the story of Moses? God uses him to free the Israelites from slavery. He parts the Red Sea. He literally drops food from Heaven for them. And what do they do? They complain!

We all complain. But, if we're going to watch our mouths... this is the best place to start. Why? Because it makes us much more fun to be around! Answer this: would you rather be stuck in an elevator with someone who spends the entire time you're stuck complaining about being stuck? Or, would you rather be stuck with someone who asks about your day, what your hobbies are, and offers to share their Snickers bar with you? You get to pick what words come out of your mouth.

The apostle Paul warns us in Philippians 2:14 :

"Do all things without grumbling or questioning."

The Bible offers us an antidote to complaining: giving thanks. Use your words to build others up. And be thankful for what we have. But, hey it's your choice.

Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit-you choose. Proverbs 18:21 (MES)

Prayer: Jesus, you know us. We complain. It's human nature. Help us to watch our words and to speak thanks and praise instead of a stream of complaints. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

TUESDAY REFLECTION:

How's the whole "no complaining" thing going for you? Was it hard? It'll get easier with practice. Was not complaining super easy for you? Did you go out telling everyone how awesome you are at not complaining? Then, you're in the right place because today's challenge is: Don't brag.

James says our actions should speak for themselves.

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth." James 3:13-14 (NIV)

Turns out, bragging about our accomplishments really turns people off. Humble bragging is even worse. Humble bragging is when you brag and try to cover it up as a complaint or being humble. (Example: "Being this attractive is so hard because losers are always hitting on me.")

A Harvard and University of North Carolina study found that humble bragging makes people like you less. The research found people even preferred straight-up whiners to braggers.

But, it's not just the humble brag, it's all the bragging. When you try to boast about yourself - you're putting yourself way above others. That's not what God wants from us. Jesus says we're supposed to love our neighbors. Trying to wow them with how great we are isn't exactly love.

The bottom line is, when we boast we're taking all the credit for the good things in our lives. There's nothing wrong with being proud of yourself for something you worked hard for: acing a test, losing 20 pounds, quitting smoking, saving up for and buying a home. However, when you only pat yourself on the back, without giving thanks to God, we forget who really deserves the credit. So, watch your words today. Don't brag. And when you find yourself getting ready to brag, maybe brag on God instead? "Did you see the awesome sunrise God gave us today?!"

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for putting up with our constantly stealing credit. Help us not to brag. Thank you for everything you give us in our lives. All the blessings. Thank you for all of it. In your holy name, we pray.

WEDNESDAY REFLECTION:

Did you guys hear that rumor about butter? Well, I don't want to go around spreading it.... (Did she just tell a butter joke? Yep.)

Gossiping - it's the next step in our "Watch your mouth" challenge. Not gossiping means not spreading it... AND refusing to listen to it. If you're like me, you can get to feeling pretty high and mighty right about now. I don't gossip (anymore.) But, hold up. What's this part about not listening to it? Ick. Okay, maybe there's more work to do.

It's hard to keep our mouths shut when we hear something juicy. It's human nature to want to share the news. People get paid to do it... ahem, TV news. Gossip is different than news. Gossip is going around telling people somebody's business.... business that might not even be true!

Have you ever confided in someone and then they went off and told all your deepest darkest secrets to anyone who would listen? It's a betrayal. I remember being a freshman in high school and having a friend (let's call her Jill) who had a bit of a mustache. She seemed pretty oblivious to it. Our other friend (let's call her Kate) and I were talking about Jill's mustache

when... you guessed it... Jill walked right around the corner. I will never forget the look in Jill's eyes when she saw us. She was heartbroken. And I felt like a total schmuck. Probably because I was one. She felt hurt because I hurt her. James talks about how even though the tongue is small... it can do big damage.

"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. James 3:5-6 (NIV)

That's gossip in a nutshell: a forest fire sparked by one small word. We can crush others with our words by talking behind their backs. And if you stand there and listen to it... it's just as bad as spreading it. The next time someone comes to you and tries to gossip about someone ask them this, "What did (insert name of person they are gossiping about) have to say about that?" It will stop the gossipers dead in their tracks because they'll have to admit they haven't gone to the source.

As Smokey the Bear said, only you can prevent forest fires. Only you can prevent gossip.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus for helping us hold our tongues. Help us as we continue to learn how to watch our words. Stop us before we start to speak about others. In your name we pray, Amen.

THURSDAY REFLECTION:

Do you remember the last compliment you received? "That outfit looks great on you!" "Wow, you are so creative!" Whatever it was about, your talents or your good looks, it felt good to hear it.

Do you remember the last insult you received? "You're not very good at that, are you?" "What's this dinner supposed to be?" Whatever it was about, your lack of talent, or your lack of ability, it hurt to hear it.

While we don't have much control over the words that are said to us, we do have control over the words we say to others.

Today's challenge: Don't tear others down.

James explains why we should not speak poorly about others.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. James 3:9-12 (NIV)

In frank, modern day, language, I think what James is saying is “don’t be two faced.” We can’t be in church singing worship songs and then yell at the guy who cuts us off on the highway minutes later. Our hearts are designed to worship, but we often fall back into our old human ways and catch ourselves taking out our frustrations on the next guy.

What’s the solution? Recall the lesson your mama taught you in kindergarten: “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.” And if you really want a challenge, try saying something nice or smiling back when someone makes you mad. If nothing else, they’ll get a little worried about you and walk away.

The bottom line is, if we’re all made in God’s image and God is in all of us, sometimes we just need to look harder to find Him. More on how to speak life tomorrow.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, that you live in all of us. Help us remember that you love us all... even when we’re feeling mighty frustrated. Help us hold our tongue. In your name we pray, Amen.

FRIDAY REFLECTION:

Last but not least, the final challenge in watching your mouth is: DO lift others up.

*So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)*

Speak life into others. Encourage other people. When you see someone who is down, offer a word of kindness. When you’re having a hard day and you just want to scream, try calling a friend and instead of venting... ask about them! Ask how they are doing. Tell people “Good Morning!” Compliment the chef, even (and especially) if it’s one of your children bringing you breakfast in bed that consists of two oreos, a fruit by the foot, and some gummy vitamins. Tell someone you’re proud of them when they accomplish something hard. Pray for someone. Hold someone’s hand and tell them they’ll get through this.

Think of ways to make other people smile. When you think, “Geez, Susan’s hair always looks perfect!” but you think telling her would make you feel like a weirdo, say it anyway. Fill your vocabulary with, “You got this!” and “Outstanding!” and “You are great!”

I know I said lifting others up was your last challenge, but here’s the real challenge for today: call or write someone a note telling them how great they are. Text it, email it, write it on a sticky note. Whatever. Just do it. Watch their response and let that smile remind you why our words are so important.

Prayer: God, you are the word. You give us life. Help us spread that love to others by speaking life, using kind words, and lifting each other up. Thank you, Jesus for everything. In your name we pray, Amen.