

“There are plenty of difficult obstacles in your path. Don’t allow yourself to become one of them.” Ralph Marston

“So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do.” That's the Living Bible translation of James 3:5. Wise words. For such a small muscle it can be incredibly powerful, seeming to run away with a mind of it's own! Boy can it put obstacles in our path too. There are people who have made a career from doing “damage control” to help fix problems created when someone says something that, for whatever reason, they should not have said. Have you every found yourself asking God to help you keep your mouth closed? You don't really want your mouth clamped shut, you really want to not say something you know you shouldn't. You know it's hurtful, hateful, off topic, just plain not what you should say. Have you ever asked God to put his hand over your mouth? I've darn sure asked for that! This need is nothing new. King David prayed “Set a guard over my mouth Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3)

I know that David and I aren't the only two who struggle with sometimes speaking before we think. The Bible gives us plenty of indication that we are in good company.

“You are snared by the words of your mouth.” (Proverbs 6:2)

“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18)

“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” (Proverbs 16:24)

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12: 36-37

Snared by my words? Yikes! Words are incredibly powerful. They can bring people together when they thought there was no hope. They can tear people apart when they never saw that coming. Turn on the news and it's so much talk about what others have said. Read the paper (they are still in print 😊) and it's words about words. Open a website...words upon words about the words of others. If we're going to spend so much time talking, it's time to take a minute and think before we speak/write. When we put something on social media we're talking in many ways. “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) The Golden Rule...doing to others includes saying to others. If you're going to disagree with someone, do it with respect. The opinions of another are no less valid to them then yours are to you. Being respectful doesn't mean compromising what you believe. It does mean that when you speak your truth in love (Eph 4:15) you're showing God to those who might not encounter Him at any other time. Sometimes we encounter a person just once – do you want their memory of that time stained by hate? Is that how you want to remember yourself in that moment? If you find yourself in a situation that's getting heated, and you want to attack the person not the content, close your eyes for a moment and think back to your parents telling you if you don't have anything nice to say then say nothing at all. There is wisdom there. amedley41@yahoo.com