



APPNOTES

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Series: James: Faith That Works

Proverbs 15:1 This is a proverb I've struggled with since youth. My family dynamic growing up was, in a word... loud. While arguing, we would respond to one another in increasing decibels until someone gave up and walked away or we lost our voice. Needless to say, this is not what God intended. Proverbs 15:1 states, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger". We are to maintain a peaceful demeanor when facing an adversary. This is much easier said than done, especially given the current events of our world. However, the energy used in escalating a conflict is much better used improving ourselves – from the inside out. We need to trust God's will to seek unity, discipline and unselfishness even though it contradicts our need to always be right. It's so tempting to get in that last word. But before engaging, think, 'does my intended response defuse a situation or detonate it'? Angry words are counterproductive! Speak peace instead of conflict.

1 Peter 3:15-16 When we accept Christ, it changes us. Those around us will notice and ask us the reason for the difference in our lives. We are called to always be ready to answer anyone who inquires. We need to reject cultural pressure to keep our beliefs to ourselves and openly share the good news through faith in Jesus. This passage of scripture instructs us that there is a certain manner in which we are to make the case for Christ. Christians are not to condemn others. We should not be insulting or vengeful to those who disagree with us. Instead, we need to explain our faith with kindness and understanding. We are to show others the love that Christ showed us. Let us be mindful of our words and manner of communication. Every conversation we have has the potential to impact others for Christ; the world is watching. Judgmental words turn people away from God!

Colossians 4:6 Many of us speak without thinking, and then we tell ourselves what we said in the heat of the moment will be easily forgotten. Unfortunately, we all know that words hurt! There is certainly no shortage of hateful speech in our world today. But, as we reflect on these verses, let us be inspired to use our words for encouragement - as a channel of communicating God's mercy and love. Our interactions with others need to stem from a desire to strengthen and build, never to tear down. There is an acronym

(THINK) originally created to help reduce online bullying. It is actually useful for all types of communications. The idea is to THINK before we communicate. Is what we are going to convey: True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind? If the answer to any of these is 'no', then it's best we remain silent. Otherwise, we will spread more conflict rather than peace and grace.

Ephesians 4:29 It's a loud, loud world! Everywhere we turn, we are bombarded with the noise of social media, newscasts, podcasts, advertisements, TV, movies, radio, politics, etc. This relentless racket takes our mind off of Christ. Instead we spend our days filling the silence with useless and sometimes sinful distractions. We often speak empty words, just so someone will hear us. Even in the quiet times, our private thoughts saturate the peacefulness with the sound of our own insecurities. Our heads continue the clamor even as we lay down to sleep at night. Jesus calls us to a very different standard. In this passage, Paul writes to the believers saying the life of a Christian should be lived with diligence, showing love to one another, and earning respect through quiet actions and service. Our goal is to build up and benefit others, and our actions need to speak louder than our words. Our goal should be compassion rather than conflict.

Hebrews 12:14 You can't have a fight with yourself; it takes two people, at least, to have an argument. So what would happen if, when conflict arises, we take ourselves out of the fight? The writer of Hebrews tells us to be at peace with everyone. Why should we choose peace? Because God is holy and has called us to be holy, too. Before we knew Christ, we were enemies of God; God had every right to react violently toward us because of our sin. Yet God chose peace when he looked on us with compassion and chose to send Jesus as a sacrifice in our place. Now we're called friends of God. It's a paradox, that his ugly death means we have life, but that's what gives us the ability to be holy and the ability to choose peace when conflict arises. The next time an argument is brewing, will you take a moment to remember what God has done for us – and choose peace?

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