

Introduction:

1. When did someone say something to you that was particularly encouraging?
2. If a video of everything you said last week started to play, what would you want to erase from it?

Understanding:

3. The old nursery rhyme says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Does this song agree with today's message? Why or why not?
4. A friend claims, "I am nice most of the time so that makes up for my outbursts of sarcasm." In the light of today's scripture, is that attitude valid? Why or why not?
5. Verse 2 says "We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check." How can you explain the way we are both stumbling and perfect within the same verse?
6. "When angry, count to 10 before you speak. If very angry, a hundred," said Thomas Jefferson. In what way is this advice biblical? In what way is it NOT biblical?
7. When we joke around and use sarcasm, we may or may not be "a maniac, shooting arrows around."(Prov. 26:18-19.) How do you discern when it is ok or not ok to use joking and sarcasm? What are some practical guidelines?
8. Someone says "I love to worship God and I love humanity. Its people I can't stand ". Read Genesis 1:27. How can we think highly of God and lowly of the people he made? Does this help you re-think when you feel you have the right to be outraged at people?
9. Read Isaiah 53:7 which is a prophecy of Jesus' attitude before he went to the cross. What is this attitude? Our own efforts to control our tongue can seem so futile! Now read Matt 19:26. How does this verse encourage us that there is hope for us in learning to control our tongue? Can you think of a situation where you especially need that?

Application:

10. Over and over again, Jesus used his words to give honor to people who weren't normally treated with honor. This week seek how God could use your words to speak life to someone who needs it.
11. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Which of these fruits of the spirit apply to our speech? Pray for the Holy Spirit to grow each of them in you in a way that begins to change the way you speak.
12. Read Proverbs 15:4. In the light of today's teaching, evaluate where you have been a tree of life in your speech and where you have crushed someone's spirit. With specific situations in mind, ask God to grow you in turning from a perverse tongue to a soothing tongue!