




Cardboard Castles

My dearly loved brothers, understand this: Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness. ~ James 1:19-20

Discover the Context James 1:19-27

 James begins today's verses with, "My dearly loved brothers." Does this have anything to do with why we should be quick to hear and slow to speak? What are we to be quick to hear? How do these verses encourage the quality of teachableness?

 What do you typically do after you have spoken unfairly or hastily to a camper or someone else on staff? Have you ever sought the forgiveness of a camper? Of someone else on staff? This doesn't diminish your authority or your relationship; it shows that your faith is real.

 Which of the verses in the Matthew 5 *Dig Deeper* reading need the most development in the area of your speech? Ask your prayer partner for some input on what to change.

A few years ago I saw an illustration of the power of speech that has stuck in my mind as I have been involved in the camping ministry. I was sitting in a college class listening to a professor who was giving a devotional on the influence that words can have on an individual. The whole time he talked, two of my classmates worked on building a castle out of cardboard boxes that the professor had provided. Throughout the lesson he would pause, taking the time to encourage them and tell them they were doing a great job. They were putting a lot of thought and ingenuity into their work, and after a while they had built a spectacular castle out of plain old cardboard boxes.

When my professor was done speaking he turned around, walked over to the castle, and destroyed it with a few swift kicks. What had taken most of the class period to build had been destroyed in a few short seconds. This is an example of how ungodly and unkind words destroy others.

Have you ever worked for days to build trust with a camper, only to lose that trust with a few quickly spoken, unwise words? Have you ever lost your temper and said something to a fellow staff member that you didn't mean? Relationships and trust can too easily be lost because of a few careless words.

I'm sure you've heard this saying, "Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." It's not true.

I believe the real truth is that broken bones will heal in a short time, but wounds inflicted by angry words may last much longer. My question for you is this—Are your words encouraging others to build beautiful castles, or are your words bringing castles to the ground?

Be slow to speak. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you guard your words and speak uplifting, Christ-centered words. [JRW]