

Guarding Our Mouth

Scripture Reading — Psalm 141:3-4; Ephesians 4:29-32

*Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.
—Psalm 141:3—*

Several years ago at a conference for ministers we were told by a psychiatrist that ministers talk too much. More recently someone in our church who felt that the sermon had been too long said, “You ministers think that we hang on to your every word. Well, we don’t.” It was his way of saying that sometimes ministers talk too much, even when preaching.

Unfortunately it’s not only ministers who talk too much. Many of us are much better at talking than we are at listening. Some of us talk before we think, and sometimes we talk about things we don’t really know much about.

Job had to admit that he had talked too much when he said, “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand” (Job 42:3). Sometimes we are guilty of using what Ephesians calls “unwholesome talk,” and too often we say things that do not build anyone up but instead hurt the other person.

Some of us need to do what Job did: “I put my hand over my mouth,” he said (Job 40:4). Or as the psalmist does, we should ask the Lord to set a guard over our mouth. James suggests that we should be “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” (James 1:19). And Jesus says that one day we will have to give account for every empty or idle word we have spoken (Matthew 12:36). We all need God’s wisdom in how to speak—and how not to.

Prayer

Please, Lord, set a guard over our mouths and keep watch over the door of our lips. Help us to speak wisely, that we may honor you. In Jesus, Amen.

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