

Mateo learned that the tongue can't be controlled without a change of heart.



THE TROUBLEMAKER

LESSON 80 → James 3:1-18

Paul Williams, the owner of the bike shop, glanced up as the bell at the door signaled someone was entering. “Hi, Mateo,” he said to the young man who strode in. “Hi, Paul,” was the reply. “Is my bike ready?”

“No, I had to order the part, and it won't be in until Monday afternoon. Should have it ready for you by Tuesday morning, though.”

Mateo's eyes flashed in anger. “What do you mean, it's not ready! I have to have it for the race this Saturday!”

Paul looked dismayed. “Oh, Mateo, I'm really sorry. You should have told me you had a race coming up. I could have put a rush on the part.”

Mateo swore angrily. “It's all your fault, and now I'm not going to be able to win that race. Give me my bike. You can bet I'll never bring it into this lousy shop again!” Dragging the bike, he stormed out.

Late that afternoon, Paul locked the door to the shop and headed across the park. He sighed as he started down the trail that was a shortcut to his home a few blocks away. That incident with Mateo really troubled him. Mateo had grown up in the neighborhood, and Paul had always liked him. But Mateo did have a temper and a real problem with his tongue whenever he got mad. Paul wondered if there was any chance of smoothing the matter over or if Mateo really would avoid dropping in at the shop now.



KEY VERSE

JESUS, HELP ME TO CONTROL MY TONGUE.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. — Matthew 12:34



Even as these thoughts were going through his mind, Paul noticed a familiar figure on the path ahead of him. Mateo! Jogging to catch up, he put a hand on Mateo's shoulder and said, "Mateo, I'm really sorry about this business with the bike. It sure is too bad you had to miss the race. Tell you what . . . I'll call around tomorrow and see if I can't locate that part somewhere else."

Mateo looked sheepish. "Oh, that's okay, Paul. I'm sorry I blew up at you this morning. I was disappointed. I'm surprised you'd even speak to me after the things I said. When I get mad, things just come out that I never meant to say."

"Well," said Paul "lots of other people have had that problem too. The tongue has caused trouble for man since the beginning of time. The Bible talks about it. It even devotes a whole chapter in the Book of James to the problem of the tongue, comparing it to a big blaze that is kindled by a small spark."

"I didn't know that," Mateo said. "I can see how the tongue could be like a fire out of control, but what can I do about it?"

Paul replied, "You need a change of heart. In the Bible it says, 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'"

"What does that mean?" Mateo asked.

"Well, Mateo, think about it. What can you take out of a full cupboard?"

Mateo looked puzzled. "Whatever is in it, I guess."

"Right," said Paul. "You can't take out what is not there. What you keep in the cupboard is what comes out of the cupboard. And what you keep in your heart is what will come out of your heart. Nothing gets changed unless you decide you want it changed."

"Now look at this park. It's a beautiful place, with velvety lawns and tall, majestic trees. It didn't just happen. The people who planted it had a plan. They cleared out rubbish, then planted, weeded, and took care of it. Now we enjoy its beauty."

"Your heart is like this park. You have to plant good things for good to come out. You can't do it on your own. Now if your heart is filled with wrong thoughts, like weeds, they will choke out all the good thoughts you try to grow. So first you have to pull up the 'weeds.' But there are so many, you can't do it alone. You need God's help."

"When you ask Him to come into your heart, He forgives you and plants seeds of love and peace. Then when you talk, good things will come out. Just like the cupboard I talked about earlier, you can't take out anything that wasn't put in." This made Mateo think.

A few days later, while jogging in the park, Mateo nearly ran headfirst into Paul. Mateo lost his footing and stumbled. Normally, a string of curses would have been heard a block away. But something had happened to Mateo! He had taken Paul's advice, and a change of heart had taken place.

"Wow! I guess I'm a bit clumsy today." Mateo said, brushing the dirt from his knees. "How are you anyway, Paul?"

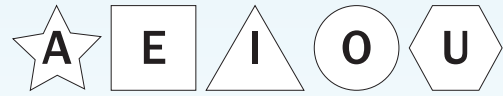
Paul looked at him in surprise. "That's not the response we'd usually hear from you after landing in the dirt, Mateo."

Mateo grinned. "Paul, I have something to tell you. The old 'cupboard' has been cleaned out since I last saw you."

Paul beamed. "That's great, Mateo! You couldn't have told me any better news!"

WHAT DID HE SAY?

It is impossible to speak English without vowels. Add the missing vowels to the words in this verse and read what Solomon, the author of Proverbs, had to say about good words.



P l _ _ s _ n t w _ r d s _ r _ _ s _ n
h _ n _ y c _ m b , s w _ _ t t _ t h _
s _ _ l , _ n d h _ _ l t h t _ t h _
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“IT’S ALL YOURS, LORD”