



## WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

### LEAD WEIGHTS | Avoiding the Patterns that Sink Relationships

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#### RECEIVE

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Take a few moments to read James 3:1–12. Read it slowly, thoughtfully, prayerfully. Read it in such a way you believe the Holy Spirit is trying to speak to you through it. When you have done this once, pause with a few moments of silence and then read it again in the same way. Consider that it is not about us getting through the Scriptures rather it is about the Scriptures getting through to us.

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#### REFLECT

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1. Think of a few of the important relationships you have right now. Say them out loud or write a few of them down in front of you to name them. What phase of relationship best characterizes each of them?
  - Criticism (hyperbole, name-calling, character-assault)
  - Contempt (sneering, sarcasm, hostile humor)
  - Defensiveness (denying, diverting, going on the attack)
  - Stonewalling (avoiding, escaping, going silent)

2. Describe a memorable example of this happening and what it felt like to be at the receiving end of it.
3. What are some of the differences between destructive “criticism” and constructive “complaint”? What relationship are you in that would benefit from your practice of the difference?

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## RESPOND

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4. Which of the four careless communication patterns would the people who know you best say YOU need to face further in yourself and change? Think in terms of your different roles: spouse, good friend, parent, follower of Jesus. Can you see their use change?
  - Criticism (hyperbole, name-calling, character-assault)
  - Contempt (sneering, sarcasm, hostile humor)
  - Defensiveness (denying, diverting, going on the attack)
  - Stonewalling (avoiding, escaping, going silent)
5. Between question 1 and 4, which did you find easiest/hardest to answer? What does this say?

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## RESOURCE

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*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, by John M. Gottman

**James 3:1-12** | New International Version

<sup>1</sup>Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup>Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

<sup>7</sup>All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup>but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

<sup>9</sup>With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup>Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup>Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup>My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.