

## THE SHIPS RUDDER

Last week, I was frantically trying to get both kids ready and out the door. (I've decided single dads don't make very good moms) I had a speaking engagement at a large church in Dallas, talking to a group of married men on how to be better husbands and better dads. I had much to say about how they should treat their children with love. After getting just to the door I had to put both kids down and go back for something. Not long after leaving them I heard Madison, my 10 month old, crying. I returned to Dane, my almost 3 year old, using her head as a doorstop. After having her head bumped 3 or 4 times, by the door, she decides she had had enough and cried for dad. Well, as you may have experienced, when you're in a hurry and life is not cooperating we get frustrated and lose our cool. Dane happened to be the closest recipient of my frustration. I got down close and yelled "STOOOOOP" clinching my teeth and fists and growled in anger. Dane, who is very unfamiliar with me doing that, fell face down and wept real tears in fear and hurt. I had literally scared and hurt him deeply. While he needed to be punished, he did not need to be verbally abused. My tongue had and my heart had sinned. At this point I stopped everything, got Madison situated and ask forgiveness of God and Dane. Fortunately, kids are great forgivers, but not all people are. How many times have our tongues been the source of either great hurt or just lack of kindness or encouraging words? Needless to say, I had just created a great illustration for my talk. Proverbs 15:1-2 "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly." Sometimes we speak with unkindness, which is unacceptable, but more than that we often pass on an opportunity to encourage with our tongue. What a gift a kind word is. I have a very special friend, Marty, who has taught me a great deal about kind words. She never passes on the chance to encourage me or anyone else she is around. As a result, people flock to be around her because they

know under her wings, a kind word will always be found. What a great ministry that creates. She has a beautiful gift. James 3:4-5 "Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire." May I encourage us all to not only hold our tongue but also to use it in a way so as to be a light in a sometimes dark world, even when the head bangs of life come along.