

FILTERS

Have you ever made coffee, and you forgot to add the coffee filter? What happened? More than likely you immediately lost your taste for coffee, or you started all over again and put your coffee grounds in a clean coffee filter. Filters are a necessary part of life. Filters contribute to our coffee tasting good. Filters are replaced in our furnaces so that the air we breathe in at home is clean. Filters in our vehicles and mowers help them to run efficiently. In fact, filters are becoming so popular and necessary that people are even putting filtering systems in their tap water so that potential pollutants are filtered out of their drinking water. More people are investing money in air filter systems to help destroy allergens that float through the air. People even buy special bedding covers that supposedly keep out dust mites, those little varmints that make you sneeze.

But have you noticed that even though people are careful to keep their filters clean so that their coffee, air, water, and vehicles are clean, we don't always have filters where we need them the most. If we don't filter out the lies, or garbage, that people, or the media, or Satan tell us, our lives can become organized around lies. In fact, without good filters, some people become so accustomed to lies that they no longer can distinguish between truth and lies, and their lives become a lie.

People who don't regularly check their "truth filter" end up taking in and believing a lot of lies. When people don't screen out lies, they also don't develop a "word filter". Whatever they think or hear someone else say, they just say it to others regardless if it's right, wrong, good, or evil. If you have spent years around people who don't have good filters, then you have probably bought into and believed some of the lies and garbage they have dumped on you (i.e. "You're not good enough", or "You'll never amount to anything"). The results can have a devastating impact on a person's self-esteem. And when the garbage dumpers go away, you just keep feeding yourself the same garbage each day. People who feed on garbage end up feeling like and talking garbage. In sports language, it's called "trash talking", and if you can't screen it out, you may lose your game.

Some producers of modern day media technology and music are becoming some of the richest polluters of filter-less lives. People of all ages are becoming hooked on addictive video games. Minds are becoming increasingly desensitized to words, lyrics, and images of violence, sex, and pornography. These images are becoming "the filters" through which people think about what is "normal" and accept as being "real". And when this becomes our culture of what is acceptable in government, at work, at school, at home, and in relationships, where do people turn for help?

Although your first answer may not be God, the church, the Bible, or your parents, we are striving to create contexts where we share and live in the truth. Truth spoken in love is much different from sarcasm, cynicism, and trash talk. Making fun of one another and then saying, "You know I was only kidding" does not lead to the development of a healthy trusting Christian community. Calling one another names you heard last night on television or in movies doesn't build one another up.

- **So where do you look for help when you need a good filter for your life?**
- **Do you know someone who relates to you in ways that honor you and build you up as a person?**
- **What do you "feed on" that sometimes clogs up your filters?**
- **What would it take for you to filter out some of the garbage you have taken in?**
- **What role can we play in each other's life to help develop and keep clean our filters?**