



## James 3:1-12 – The Power Of Words

June 4, 2023

### Why do my words matter?

#### 1. The words of a teacher direct the course of a life.

*Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers,... James 3:1a (ESV)*

##### A. Many teachers want attention, power, and control, not to humbly serve.

*They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. Matthew 23:5-7 (ESV)*

##### B. Teachers will be judged more strictly by God.

*...for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. James 3:1b (ESV)*

*...Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. Luke 12:48b (ESV)*

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1 (ESV)*

**BUT**

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)*

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Romans 14:12 (ESV)

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 (ESV)

### **C. We all stumble in our words.**

For we all stumble in many ways... James 3:2a (ESV)

...And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. James 3:2b (ESV)

"Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. Job 40:4 (ESV)

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Isaiah 6:5 (ESV)

...for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips. Psalm 106:33 (ESV)

### **D. The words of my mouth reveal the spiritual maturity of my life.**

The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. Matthew 12:35 (ESV)

## **2. My words make a big difference.**

If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. James 3:3 (ESV)

Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things... James 3:4–5a (ESV)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. Proverbs 18:21 (ESV)

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. Proverbs 15:4 (ESV)

### **3. My words can be incredibly destructive.**

...How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. James 3:5b-6 (ESV)

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, Matthew 12:36 (ESV)

### **4. My words can't be tamed by my own strength.**

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. James 3:7-8 (ESV)

### **5. The words I speak reveal a double standard in my heart.**

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. James 3:9-12 (ESV)

- We should strive to have speech that is consistently, not sporadically, honoring God.

## Applications

1. **We must understand the power of our words.** Words will either make or break our life and the lives of those around us.
2. **We must understand that spiritual maturity is consistently using our words to honor God.** Acting one way on Sunday but gossiping, grumbling, or distorting the truth on Monday is spiritual immaturity. It doesn't matter if a person is knowledgeable, witty, or a senior saint. The prime measurement of spiritual maturity is our words.
3. **What steps can I take to bring my words and faith into better alignment?**
  - A. **Ask God for help to speak and act in ways that are consistently pleasing to Him.** See James 1:5.
  - B. **Be quick to listen and slow to speak.** See James 1:19.
  - C. **Remember that we will give an account for every careless word.** See Matthew 12:36.
  - D. **Refuse to engage in unwholesome, gossipy, or whiny conversations.**

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.  
*Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)*

- E. **Let the struggle to master our mouth remind us of the depth of our sin and drive us to the grace of Jesus.**
- F. **Immerse myself in the living Word and watch how it transforms my spoken words.**

## Life Group Questions

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1. How frequently do you complain, criticize, gossip, or bend the truth? After this study, in what ways were you convicted to change your speech?
2. **Read James 3:1-2.** These verses remind us of the danger and power of becoming a teacher. How have teachers done damage to our children? Who are the informal teachers many follow? What unique dangers come with being a Christian teacher?
3. **Read James 3:3-5.** James reminds us that the tongue is a small part of the body that makes a big difference. Share a time when words crushed you. Share a time when someone's words gave you the encouragement you desperately needed. What does this teach you about the power and importance of your words?
4. **Read James 3:7-8.** The tongue is described as an untamable creature full of deadly poison. Since we cannot change the tongue on our own strength, how can our speech change? See the application of the sermon for ideas.
5. **Read James 3:9-12.** James zeroed in on the problem of Christians living with a double standard. Our words are not to be holy on Sunday but sarcastic on Monday. In what ways do you struggle to glorify God with your words? Review the applications at the end of the sermon. What practical steps will you take to have your speech be more consistently honoring to God?