

BIG IDEA: Our words have power.

James 3:2-5a *“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horse’s mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 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.”*

The tongue may be small in proportion to the rest of the body, but it has extraordinary power.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

What are some positive words that have been spoken to you that have had great power in your life? Who spoke them? Describe the power they have had?

What are some negative words that have been spoken to you that have had great power in your life? Who spoke them? Describe the power they have had?

What images does James use to compare the power of words that come from our mouths? Which one do you most relate to? Why?

Your words are powerful too. Who in your life is regularly being affected by your words? What kind of effect are your words producing?

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that ***“The Word of God is powerful and effective...”*** How has the Word of God specifically had a powerful effect in your life?

In James 1:19, we are instructed to be ***“quick to listen and slow to speak”***. How is that dynamic present or not present in your life?

ACTION STEPS:

Write a Note: Write a note of thanks to the person who spoke lifegiving powerful words over you. Let them know how their words affected you so richly.

Prayer: Talk with the Lord about the power of His Word. Thank Him for His Words of life that have impacted you. Ask Him to use His Word powerfully in your life in the coming days.

Consider Your Top 5: Make a list of the top 5 people in your life who are affected by your words. Think about the ways your words are affecting them. Ask the Lord if there is anything you need to adjust and if so, make a plan to do so.

“... let everyone be quick to listen and slow to speak...”

James 1:19

BIG IDEA: Our words have power to destroy

James 3:5-6 *“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! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”*

The tongue may be small, but in its depravity, it is fueled by hell’s brokenness, and can cause great destruction.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Think of an example of someone who famously lost control of their mouth. What is your perception of that person? What harm did they cause? What consequences do you think they faced?

In which relationship do you most often find yourself losing control of your mouth? Describe any relational consequences as a result?

Discuss why is it often easier to remember the harsh words of those who hurt you rather than the kind words of those who encouraged you.

To describe the destructive power of our mouths, James uses the example of a spark of fire that destroys a large forest. Have you ever experienced that kind of destruction from words, either those you spoke to someone else, or through words that were spoken to you?

Consider this statement as a loose paraphrase of James 3:6 *“Your mouth is the enemy’s favorite toy on hell’s playground and he likes nothing better than to jump on your tongue and play all day, leaving destruction all around you.”* How do you identify with this description?

ACTION STEPS:

Conversation: Initiate a conversation with a trusted friend or mentor concerning any relationships where you know you may be causing harm with your mouth. Ask for counsel, prayer and accountability.

Forgiveness: It is easy to hold onto words that have wounded us. Make a list of anyone you need to forgive who has wounded you with their words and give that list to the Lord in prayer. Also, seek out the forgiveness of anyone you may have wounded with your words.

Remove: Sometimes we need to remove our mouth from certain situations where they enemy is lighting a fire and playing within it. Is there anything that you need to remove from your day to day experience that may be kindling that fire? If so, take the necessary action.

“... let everyone be quick to listen and slow to speak...”

James 1:19

BIG IDEA: Our tongues are untamable.

James 3:7-8 *“For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.”*

The tongue is not to be trusted.

We need to understand the need to continually keep it under control.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Describe some of the different ways you see this Truth, *“but no one can tame the tongue, it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison”* played out in our world today?

Describe some of the different ways you see this Truth, *“but no one can tame the tongue, it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison”* played out in your own life as well.

Consider Psalm 141:3 which says, *“Set a guard O Lord over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips.”* King David wrote this prayer obviously aware that his tongue was untamable and in need of boundaries. What are some of the different ways the Lord answers this kind of prayer? Have you ever prayed this? When the Lord answered, how did you respond?

ACTION STEPS:

Memorize: Memorize James 3:7-8 to help you remember the need to continually have boundaries around your tongue and the words that flow from it.

Confess: Confess to a trusted friend or mentor regarding ways that your tongue is out of control. Ask them to pray for you.

Pray Scripture: Pray the same prayer that David prayed in Psalm 141:3, *“Set a guard O Lord over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips.”*

“... let everyone be quick to listen and slow to speak...”

James 1:19

BIG IDEA: Our words can cause confusion.

James 3:8-12 *“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can fig tree my brothers produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.”*

**When we use our words for polarizing things,
we confuse others and ourselves about who we are, and Who God is.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

James said, **“My brothers, these things ought not to be this way.”** Consider the different kinds of confusion that words of praise and words of slander can cause in the home, marriage, workplace, school, church and community.

James asked questions with obvious answers regarding a fountain and trees. For the fountain, it should only have one source; if it has two, one will pervert the other. In that regard, is there any source that you are allowing to pervert your words and make them bitter? If so, what should you do about that source?

Have you ever been in relationship with someone whose words brought about this kind of confusion for you? How did it make you feel? What was your long-term response to this person?

For what reason does James say it is wrong to **“curse men”** with our words? Have you possibly forgotten that about certain people in your life? If so, who are they and why?

ACTION STEPS:

Repent: Has the Holy Spirit revealed places in your life where your words may be bringing about confusion in the manner that verses 8-12 describe. If so, repent of these things.

Pray: In follow up to your repentance, pray and ask the Lord for strength and wisdom to change.

Memorize: Memorize James 3:10, **“from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers these things ought not to be this way”** to give the Holy Spirit a word to remind you of in moments when your mouth is tempted to speak in confusing ways.

“... let everyone be quick to listen and slow to speak...”

James 1:19

BIG IDEA: Our mouths can bring LIFE.

James 3:2-12 *“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horse’s mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. 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. 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! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brothers these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can fig tree my brothers produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Neither can salt water produce fresh.”*

James writes these verses to describe how our tongues can powerfully produce destruction.

But understanding the full counsel of God’s Word, we can see that hidden in the depths of these verses is the same Truth turned upside down... that our tongues are also powerful to produce LIFE!

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”

Proverbs 18:21

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

The distinguishing difference between the three examples James uses in verses 2-6 is that the horse and the rudder have a Director, but the fire does not. What difference would it make in your day to day speech if you employed the Holy Spirit as the Director of your mouth?

James speaks about a fountain having one source to produce fresh water. How are you **“sourcing your mouth”** with Words of LIFE so that it will produce LIFE?

Think of some words of LIFE that you desire to hear? What are they? Who would you like to hear them from? What kind of difference would they make in your life?

Because you are a redeemed child of God with the Holy Spirit alive in you, you have been given the right and power to speak LIFE! How are you using that right? How can you better use it in the days to come?

ACTION STEPS:

Consider: Consider who may be longing to hear word of LIFE from you? How can you bless them?

Dream: Dream with God about the impact of LIFE He would like to effect through your words. Write down what He shows you.

Pray: Ask God to help you put His dreams into action.

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James 1:19