

## **The World of Words**

### **James 3:1-12**

Ill – When you go to the doctor, the doctor asks you to stick out your tongue. Why? It reveals your health.

The quality and content of your words reveals the health of your soul.

Most of the hurt in our lives comes from words; words we have spoken, and words spoken to us.

In the modern era words abound. Think about all the digital platforms that you use that also involve words.

This text is the most sustained discussion of words.

#### **First: The Power of our Words**

Harry Potter – There is a lot of magic in the books. At the end of the last book one of Harry's mentors says: *"Words are our most inexhaustible source of magic capable of both inflicting injury and remedying it."*

a) God takes our speech seriously. V 1

V 1 – God takes our speech seriously

Matthew – Everyone will have to give account of words

c) Words are not ordinary but are capable of great things vs 3-5

In James' day, a horse was the most powerful force that could be harnessed to get something done and moved by a bit

In James' day, a ship was the largest vehicle, moving through the sea even in the midst of a great storm but moved by a rudder

You would not expect something so powerful to be guided by something so small.

V 5 – Yet even though the tongue is small, it does great things.

b) Words are actually deeds. 5

God is the first speaker in the Bible.

**Genesis 1 – And God said, let there be light....**

God is a speaking God and his words create and effect reality.

Words do things.

Made in God's image, our words are not ordinary but extraordinary

ILL – How has your self-image been shaped by the positive and negative words of others?  
How is your self-image shaped by your own positive and negative words?

Words are at the heart of relationships.

James is saying, *“Wake up to the power of your words.”*

Our words can be used positively but we often use them negatively. It would appear, from James, that negative, harmful, destructive words are the norm and positive, blessing and encouraging words are the exception – supernatural

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*  
– Ephesians 4:25-32

### **Second: The Effect of our words**

a) Our words can be destructive and damaging 6-8

- Fire. 6
- Beast. 7
- Poison. 8

We are often unaware of the full effect of our words. James says, “See the potential destruction.”

It can be harder to stop a rumor than a forest fire.

If only our words could turn into a visible, seeable solid so that we could see the effect of our words.

b) Words expose our hearts. 11-12

A plant can only produce fruit according to its nature. Your words don't make you but you make your words. Words flow out of our heart. Words reveal the heart.

*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned - Matthew 12:34-37*

There is no better barometer of your heart than your words

III – 9-10 – “Let’s say you claim Christ. Do you have dual allegiances? Who is winning the competition for your heart?”

Self can be such a functional god that we are liable to say anything to save ourselves

Do we spin the truth? Exaggerating is lying

*God has an agenda for our relationships. For that reason, proper communication is not so much about getting what we want out of our relationships as it is being part of what God is seeking to do.... An ambassador does one thing only — represent. His job is to incarnate a king who is not present. Every word he speaks is directed by the king's interests and will. This is exactly what God is calling us to do. What we say must be driven by what God is seeking to accomplish in us and in the other person....*

*Here's the point: Your words are always in pursuit of some kind of kingdom. You are either speaking as a mini-king, seeking to establish your will in your relationships and circumstances, or you are speaking as an ambassador, seeking to be part of what the King is doing.*  
- Paul David Tripp in *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*

**Words are never neutral.**

Since this is all true, how can our speech be healed?

### **Third: The Healing of our Words**

a) Our hearts need to be filled with a good thing

The way you learn to speak is how you are spoken to.

The Bible is God’s word to us. God speaks to us in the Bible.

At one point in Jesus’ ministry the Pharisees sent men to kidnap Jesus. These men returned to the Pharisees but without Jesus. When asked why they did not apprehend him, they responded -

*The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!” – John 7:46*

Even his enemies recognized the goodness of his heart by listening to his speech

If our speech is healed it is because the Word soaks into our lives and our hearts are filled with the Bible.

*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*

Good speech is the result of a heart filled with good things. The person who speaks good doesn't try hard to speak good things but that person has put good deep inside.

Good speech is inevitable.

Matt 12:35 is a good verse to memorize.

It was said of John Bunyan – *“Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere and he will bleed the Bible.”*

What does this take?

You won't prize the Bible until God changes your heart

b) Our hearts need to be renewed. V 6

Hell is a place of eternal torment but there is another kind of fire.

Acts 2 = Pentecost = the fire of heaven

*Acts 2:2-4 - And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

The Holy Spirit purged their tongues and made them new

This is a reversal of Genesis 11 – The Tower of Babel when men used speech to their own advantage and to curse God

*Genesis 11:4 & 7 - Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.....Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.”*

Pentecost reconciles what Babel tore apart

What happened between Babel and Pentecost? The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

On the cross, Jesus endured silence from heaven. He endured silence, so we can hear God's voice. He endured the fire of hell so that we might enjoy the fire of heaven.

**Conclusion:**

- 1 – Our words reveal our hearts
- 2 – Our words are world-creators and world-destroyers
- 3 – God changes our words by changing our hearts

**Community Group:**

- 1 – What is the topic this week?
- 2 – This is the longest single text in the Bible dealing with words. Why is it so important?
- 3 – What are the most encouraging words ever spoken directly to you, for you?
- 4 – What made those words so encouraging?
- 5 – What are the most encouraging words you have ever spoken to anyone?
- 6 – Read James 3:5-8. To what three forces does James compare our words?
- 7 – Why does James assume the tendency of our words is negative?
- 8 - How have you witnessed words used as fire, a wild beast or poison?
- 9 – Read Matthew 12:34-37 – How do our words reveal our hearts?
- 10 – Read James 3:9-10 – What does James say about Christians and destructive words?
- 11 – Paul David Tripp says concerning our words that we are either “mini-kings” or “ambassadors.” Explain those two concepts
- 12 – Read Matthew 12:35 - What do we need to do to speak good things? **Fill our heart with good things.**
- 14 – Make a list of the ‘good things’ with which you can fill your heart.
- 15 – What verse or verses will you memorize this week to fill your heart with the ‘good thing’ of the Bible?