



**Sermon Series:** Watch Your Mouth Part 1

**Sermon Title:** The Power of Words

**Speaker/ Date:** Armin Sommer, August 16, 2020

### James 3:3–6

Words have power. They can affirm or embarrass, build up, or tear down.

Our words have power to give life and inspire or to drain vitality and deflate. And God holds us accountable for them. **Matthew 12:36**

To bridle the tongue requires, not superhuman strength, but supernatural strength. **Ephesians 6:10**

**Big Idea:** Take care what you say, because your words have impact.

Several effects.

#### Effect #1. Words Mark our Maturity

##### James 3:2

The expression “make many mistakes” means literally, “to fall or to trip.” Who hasn’t experienced the embarrassment of physical clumsiness? Just as physical clumsiness indicates immaturity, so does verbal clumsiness. We tend to identify doctrinal depth or scripture memorization as the key indicator of spiritual maturity. But even if you’re a walking Bible, and debate theology like a seminary professor, if I can’t control my tongue, I’m as immature as the person who doesn’t know John 3:16.

#### Effect #2. Words Influence Our Direction

##### James 3:3–5

Words chart a course. Genesis 27 records the story of two brothers, Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac. Jacob manipulates his famished brother Esau into selling him his birthright for a bowl of stew. Part of that birthright was a prophetic blessing from their Father. Isaac gives that blessing to Jacob. And what was Esau’s reaction? **Genesis 27:34–40**

The long-term result... **Genesis 27:41** “Esau held a grudge against Jacob...”

A father’s words set a direction for Esau. Remember that when you speak to your kids. Utter words of blessing and expectations of a great future.

### **Effect #3. Words Can Be Destructive (or Life-Giving)**

**James 3:5**

The tongue can light fires that destroy friendships, marriages, churches.  
**Proverbs 18:21, Proverbs 21:23**

Words set courses and light fires. But also can be life-giving. **1 Thess. 5:11**

Before you speak, pause and ask yourself the question, “Will what I am about to say give life, or will they tear down?”

### **Effect #4. Words uncover character**

**James 3:7–8**

Wild words reveal wild hearts. You may restrain and train a wild animal. It may even seem domesticated. But it’s nature is still wild. **Matthew 12:34**

Words uncover character. **James 3:9–12**

Polluted wells are unusable. A polluted tongue can render me useless. The New Testament tells us, when considering candidates for church leadership, pay attention to the way they talk. **1 Timothy 3:8**

The word “sincere” is literally, “not double-talker.” This is a picture of a person who on one occasion can talk like a follower of Jesus, but in another context speaks like he’s not. We limit our usefulness to God when we speak that way.

How should we respond to this message?

#### **Response #1. Be Self-Aware**

Before you speak to someone, ask yourself...

What will this say about me? How will my words influence the other person?

Will they be destructive or life-giving?

Take seriously Paul’s admonition **Colossians 4:6**

#### **Response #2. Remember that God is listening Psalm 19:14**

#### **Response #3. Exercise verbal restraint Psalm 141:3, Proverbs 21:23**

Be generous with encouragement and stingy with criticism. Especially with your family.

#### **Response #4. Limit contact with those who are out of control 1 Cor. 15:33**

Don’t accept the narrative that careless communication is acceptable.

### Discussion Questions:

- **What about the sermon stuck with you this week? What part challenged your thinking?**
- **Why do people speak hurtful words to others?**
- **Do you think there greater uncivility in peoples language today than in previous generations? If so, what has changed in our culture that people feel they can so freely insult one another?**
- **What are some of the most memorable words that you remember someone speaking to you? Why are they so memorable?**
- **How has your life been influenced by the positive or negative words of another person?**
- **Are you conscious of the impact your words have on others?**
- **Why do we tend to focus on the hurtful words from another person over the encouraging words?**
- **You can say anything to anyone as long as you know how to say it. Do you think that is true? How does that thought change the way you should speak to others?**