

THIS WEEKEND

at The Crossing



Nope: Nope to Wild
Scott Whaley
May 5, 2024

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are continuing our ten-week series in the book of James called Nope. It is a deep dive into following the crowd counter-culturally. This word is one we use to vehemently say “no” to the evil values of our culture most strongly! It means “no way in heck!” Here, James, Jesus’ half brother, teaches us how to say no to wild. In this context we are talking about our tongues – the words we say can either warm a heart or, as in a wild fire, burn down a relationship.

SCRIPTURE¹

James 3:1-2 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways, Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

James 3:6-12 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or takes ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Matthew 12:34b-37 For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. Your words, spoken and unspoken, reveal the state of your soul. But I tell you that

¹ All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Isaiah 6:5 I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.

OBSERVATION

James led the Church in Jerusalem for about three years before persecution of believers caused them to disperse to other countries in the world. He wrote this letter to admonish the new churches they raised up to live pure lives for Jesus, beginning with controlling their tongues which were capable of causing great harm by cursing or great good through encouragement. We are to follow his advice as we look heavenward to our face-to-face meeting with our Savior.

QUESTION: What words have you said in the past most affected your life today?

APPLICATION

In many ways the course of our lives is affected by the words we say. For example, "Will you marry me?" or "I want a divorce." or "You're hired!" or "Does this dress make me look fat?" When have we considered the degree to which words spoken to us, words spoken about us or words spoken over us have shaped our lives? Some of the worst things that happened to us began with words just as our own have hurt others.

QUESTION: When has someone hurt you by their words? How did you react?

QUESTION: Who have you hurt by your words? If there is still an opportunity to apologize to that person when will you do it?

We all have situations and relationships where we feel it's appropriate to speak into someone else's life, but we can do great damage if our words are gossipy or sarcastic, or harsh, or lies, or deceitful or angry or complaining. James is saying that the words coming out of our mouths are a reflection of our spiritual maturity. (Wow! Did you feel that slap on the back of your head, too?) He is saying that we have the potential to burn down our marriages, our relationships with our kids and our careers when we say the wrong thing at the wrong time! People who are told, "You will never amount to anything" may spend the rest of their lives either burning themselves out trying to prove those words wrong, or just giving up.

QUESTION: What is your tongue telling you about the health of your soul?

QUESTION: How do you feel when God is telling you that you are spiritual immature because of your words?

James is not saying that our words determine whether or not we can enter heaven, but they do indicate whether or not we are fully surrendered to Jesus. One of the signs that we are being transformed into the image of Christ is that angry and hurtful words are coming out of us less often. We should notice a change in our behavior and so should the people around us. When we consider the moment when we will stand before God in our brokenness, would that change the way we criticize others, or talk unkindly about our bosses to co-workers, or call our kids something hateful or mutter about our spouses under our breath?

QUESTION: What words do you specifically not use any longer?

Likewise, consider that encouraging words spring from a joyful soul; comforting words pour from a compassionate soul; inspiring words leap from a courageous soul. When we do that, we realize that we need to ask for help in dealing with those parts of our soul that need attention. That help comes when we ask God to heal us and thank Him for words we say that heal others. Eventually, we will be a people who can always speak from our hearts in full confidence that what comes out will be true, noble and pure because our hearts have become like Jesus' heart.

QUESTION: What other areas of your spiritual life have you changed since believing in Jesus?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive us for letting our tongues burn like wild fires in our lives – hurting others and ourselves. Please help us to wait upon You before we speak. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: What words have you said in the past most affected your life today?

QUESTION: What is your tongue telling you about the health of your soul?

QUESTION: How do you feel when God is telling you that you are spiritual immature because of your words?

QUESTION: When has someone hurt you by their words? How did you react?

QUESTION: Who have you hurt by your words? If there is still an opportunity to apologize to that person when will you do it?

QUESTION: What words do you specifically not use any longer?

QUESTION: What other areas of your spiritual life have you changed since believing in Jesus?