

The Weight of Our Words

Pastor Kris Brenes

Our words have directional power.

For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look 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. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. James 3:2-5a

Our words can do extensive damage.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And 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

We can't fix this on our own.

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

Our words reveal what's really going on in our hearts.

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. James 3:9-10

We need a new heart.

Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. James 3:11-12

Extinguishing the fire (James 1:19)

- Quick to listen, slow to speak.
- Slow to get angry, quick to say, "I'm sorry."
- Speak life-giving words.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32

Let's Talk About It

James shows us that our tongues, while a small part of our bodies, have the potential to impact the course of our lives. Like a small spark that starts a wildfire, our words can do more damage than we realize. But, James makes it clear that this isn't just a behavior problem that we try to manage—it's a heart problem. Our words reveal what's really going on inside us. And while we can't fully control our tongues on our own, this points us to our deep need for Jesus to transform us from the inside out. The good news is that through the Gospel, Jesus doesn't just help us manage our words—He gives us a new heart. As we surrender to Him and intentionally work at it, we're able to use our words to bring healing, unity, and life to those around us.

James 3:1-12; Matthew 12:34-36; Proverbs 18:21; Ezekiel 36:26; James 1:19; Ephesians 4:31-32

- Which part of the message impacted and challenged you?
- Read James 3:1-12. Why do you think James spends so much time talking about our words? What does this passage reveal about the connection between our words and our hearts?
- Why is controlling our tongue so difficult, even when we know better? How have words spoken to you in the past shaped you—for better or worse?
- Do you tend to justify your words or take responsibility for them? Why? What would it look like for Jesus to reshape the way you speak—not just filter it?
- Read James 1:19. What would it look like this week to be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry"?
- Where do you see inconsistency between what you believe and what you say? Is there a relationship that has been affected by your words recently?

Take a Step

- If there is someone you need to apologize to or seek reconciliation with, take that step this week.
- How can you intentionally use your words to bring life, encouragement, or healing this week?

Here's My Prayer

God, thank You for showing me the power of my words and how they reflect what's really going on in my heart. Forgive me for the times I've used my words to hurt others instead of heal and change me from the inside out. By Your Spirit, help me slow down, listen well, and speak in ways that bring life, unity, and encouragement to others. In Jesus' name, amen.