

THE BOOK OF JAMES

LIFE LIVING LESSONS

Session 6: The Power of Words James 3:1-18

Thesis = Our _____ is the Window of Our Soul.

James 3:1

³Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Understanding the Power of Our Tongue:

- **The Principle** - If you can control your tongue, you can control your life. (v .2)

James 3:2

²We 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.

Luke 6:45

⁴⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

According to Jesus in Luke 6:45, what does He say regarding the tongue?

James 3:3-5a

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or take 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. ⁵Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

- **The Proof** - Our tongue is a small but a **powerful** instrument to institute major changes in our lives. (3:3-5a)

What's the problem with the phrase, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?" _____

What is it about hurtful words that make it so hard to "forgive and forget?" _____

Matthew 12:33-37

³³"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵A 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.

³⁶But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

According to Matthew 12:33-37, what does our tongue reveal about us? And what effect do our words have on us? _____

James 3:5b-8

⁵Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶The 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. ⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

The Warning - Our tongue is not only powerful, but a _____ and

_____ foe. (3:5b-8)

γέεννα (Gehenna): translated to our word “hell.” Gehenna is named after a place outside ancient Jerusalem where the worshippers of Baal had child sacrifices and was described as “filled with the blood of innocents.” Therefore, it was thought to be a cursed place. This is viewed in ancient culture as a destination for the wicked.

James 3:9-12

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

• **The Reason** - Our tongue reveals the _____ of our hearts. (3:9-12)

Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ There are six things the Lord hates,
seven that are detestable to him:
¹⁷ haughty eyes,
 a lying tongue,
 hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked schemes,
 feet that are quick to rush into evil,
¹⁹ a false witness who pours out lies
 and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

Why do you think “haughty eyes” and “a lying tongue” are the first two actions among what God hates? _____

Which problems relating to the tongue do you struggle with most?

- Complaining
- Bragging
- Lying
- Gossiping
- Criticizing
- Talking condescendingly
- Talking too much

What are you going to do about this struggle? _____

Why is verbal expression of praise so important? _____

How to Relate Wisely to Others

James 3:13

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

In verse 13, James talks about “deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” Explain what true humility is and why wisdom leads into humility. _____

James 3:14

¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Man's Wisdom: "Me-centered" attempts to achieve and appear righteous to satisfy ego needs and fulfill private agendas.

Characteristics of Man's Wisdom (v.14) _____

- **Bitter envy:** Greek word means _____. Intense negative emotions towards another's _____ or _____.
- **Selfish ambition:** being motivated and driven by ego needs, pride, and the desire to be seen and admired. The need to be in control and to fulfill your own agenda.

Give an example of how a believer might demonstrate bitter envy or selfish ambition. _____

James 3:15

¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

Source of Man's Wisdom (v.15) _____

James 3:16

¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Results of Man's Wisdom (v. 16) _____

Give an example of some of the results of man's wisdom in the Church. _____

James 3:17

¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

God's Wisdom: "Christ Centered" dependency that seeks to obey God and serve others to fulfill God's agenda.

Characteristics of God's Wisdom (v. 17)

- Pure - If I'm wise, I won't compromise my _____
- Peaceable - If I'm wise, I won't antagonize your _____
- Gentle - If I'm wise, I won't minimize other's _____
- Submissive (Open to reason) - If I'm wise, I won't criticize other's _____
- Full of mercy- If I'm wise, I won't disregard _____
- Good fruit- If I'm wise, I will produce _____
- Impartial- If I'm wise, I won't show _____
- Sincere- If I'm wise, I won't use others for _____

These characteristics can be summarized in this way: God's wisdom will be revealed in the lives that are characterized by personal holiness and relational oneness.

James 3:18

¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Shalom: Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquility and can be used idiomatically to mean both hello and goodbye.¹

Conclusion

Our tongue is the window of our soul. What comes out of our mouths often gives us a clear view into what is inside our hearts. If we are not careful, we can set off a wildfire in and among our world with our tongues. James tells us it is a deadly poison. Also, wisdom that comes from this world is destructive and causes disorder, but God's wisdom provides a harvest of righteousness, which abounds in peace. Both our speech and our minds must be continually renewed by our Savior, who gives wisdom to those who ask. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:5)

¹ "Shalom." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 26 Sept. 2019.