



# James

Living Right in a Wrong World!

## Living Right with Your Words!

**James 3:1-12**

Message #8 of 15 – S970

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Sunday Morning Service

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# Living Right with Your Words!

*James 3:1-12*

## Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 3**
- Today, we continue the series: **James - Living Right in a Wrong World!**
- Words are powerful! Words are important!
- Words are how we connect and interact with other humans
- When we use our words correctly, it is good! **Proverbs 25:11**

**A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in settings of silver.**

- And **Proverbs 15:23**

**A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *it is!***

- The right word at the right time in the right way can be life-altering and life-giving
- Sadly, using words the wrong way can also be life-altering but not in a good way and rather than being life-giving they can be destructive
- Choosing the right words around children is vitally important to their long-term mental health
- Children raised in an environment where negative language was common are significantly more likely to struggle in life
- They are more likely to have a poor image of themselves – experience anxiety and depression – practice self-defeating behaviors and more likely to repeat those negative words in other relationships
- On the other side – children raised in environments where good, positive words are used around them are more likely to flourish in life
- James is going to tell us in our text for the day that this is not always easy – we have a problem – all of us do
- Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us with our words
- **Pray**

## Teaching

- **Living Right with Your Words!**

- James has been helping us to see the connection between what we believe and what we do
- This is important as we live in this world in which most people have rejected God and His Word
- I said recently that the world has faith – it is just in something or someone other than God and His perfect Word
- As Christians, our goal ought to be to live our faith in a manner that pleases God – After all – He created us, sent His Son to die for us, promised to care for us, and is preparing a place for us in heaven
- Because God is good and because we have been created to reflect God’s image out into the world – our words should be good
- Our words should reflect the goodness of God
- God cares about the words we use **Matthew 12:36**  
**But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**
- James begins by telling us one group is more accountable for their words than others
- **James 3:1**
- The sense of this verse is that James is referring to teachers within the church, but it should also be applied to anyone who assumes the role of teacher – in schools, homeschooling parents, etc.
- Teachers have a calling to lead others toward truth.
- They are given the authority and power to influence others.
- James is telling us to take that responsibility very seriously.
- With increased responsibility comes greater accountability.
- As believers we will all give an accounting before God **Romans 14:10-12**  
**But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**
- As a teacher I will stand before God and give a stricter accounting for my words than others will.
- That is a humbling thought – it should be for all teachers
- He then goes to tell us of the personal power of our words

- **James 3:2**
  - The word ‘perfect’ in that verse has the idea of completeness or maturity
  - Being able to control your words so that they reflect the goodness, grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness of God is a sign of spiritual maturity - of a full and mature faith
  - Someone who does not reflect God in their words is manifesting their spiritual immaturity
  - James also makes the point that someone who can control their tongue is also able to control the rest of their life
  - Said, ‘we all stumble in many things’
  - This is also meant to humble us before God
  - We need God to help us use the right words
  - James then gives two practical examples of how much influence our words have on us and others
  - **James 3:3-5a**
  - A horse is a creature with a will of its own
  - The bit is used to override the internal nature of the beast to cause it to yield to the will of the rider
  - A ship does not have a will of its own, but it is influenced by the environment around it – the wind primarily but also currents
  - The rudder is used to override the influence of the external influences to cause the ship to go where the pilot desires
  - As believers we have to deal with both internal and external influences **Galatians 5:16-17**
- I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**
- After we were saved, the Holy Spirit took up residence in us
  - His work is to help us live in a way that pleases God
  - Our flesh resists that – seeking to please itself
  - It is our faith in God and in His Word empowered by the power of the Spirit of God that enables us to override the desires of our flesh and do and say what pleases God
  - We are also influenced by the things of this world

- And because most people in the world have rejected God and His Word, the influence is away from God and His will
- Our faith is what allows us to override those influences and do and say what God wills
- James then tells us the danger of an unrestrained tongue
- **James 3:5b**
- A single match smaller than a child's finger can set thousands of acres of forest ablaze
- **James 3:6**
- An unrestrained tongue is a dangerous thing.
- A person's whole life can be ruined by something they say.
- In the culture that we live in today (2021) it is not uncommon for someone to be 'cancelled' for saying something that doesn't agree with the cultural narrative.
- For example: saying a man cannot be a woman is considered by some as hate speech, even though it is a true statement of reality.
- A tongue unrestrained by faith can do all kinds of evil.
- Gossip – saying something behind someone's back that you wouldn't say to their face.
- Flattery – saying something to someone's face that you wouldn't say behind their back.
- Slander – saying something with the intention of causing harm to the reputation of the other person.
- There are also things like criticism, meanness, sarcasm, boasting, etc.
- It all comes down to what is in your heart.
- If what is in your heart is wrong, Satan will set it on fire for evil.
- If what is in your heart is right, God will set it on fire for good!
- **James 3:7-8**
- Unruly = uncontrollable or unstable.
- Having a tongue that is not controlled by real faith is like carrying a rattlesnake by the tail everywhere you go.
- Everyone who gets close to you will be bit – poisoned by your words
- **James 3:9-12**

- Cursing our enemies is a natural response to those who come against us or are different than we are.
- Faith in God and His Word calls us to an unnatural response – one that is not natural **Matthew 5:43-45**

**You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.**

- The singular nature of a spring and fruit-bearing plants is a picture of God’s will for our tongue.
- God’s people should be known for the good that comes forth from their tongues.
- Faith is the bit and rudder of our tongue
- Is good coming out of your mouth or is it bitter
- Jesus said faith in Him changes what comes out of us **John 7:38**  
**He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**
- Those living waters are words and works that flow out of a believer’s life who is trusting in God, obeying God’s Word, and being led by the Holy Spirit
- It is not natural – it is spiritual – Turn to **2 Corinthians 10**
- And because it is not natural, you are going to need spiritual help
- Ask God for help – He wants to help us be a good reflection of Him
- And one of the first things you should ask Him to help you with is your thoughts
- We are in a spiritual battle – need to use spiritual weapons
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**
- Turn to **Philippians 4**
- The problem with the way many people communicate, is that they do not think before they speak
- The Bible gives us tools to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ
- The apostle Paul gives us a list of criteria for evaluating our thoughts
- **Philippians 4:8**
- Suppose Kelly were to say to me, ‘You never pay attention to me!’

- Using the first criteria – ask the question, ‘Is it true?’
- If you know us, then you know it is not true
- That doesn’t mean that she doesn’t feel that way – and it doesn’t mean that I give her the appropriate amount of attention
- Turn to **1 Corinthians 13**
- As believers we are called to speak what is true, but not just truth
- **Ephesians 4:15a**  
... **speaking the truth in love...**
- So not only are we trying to speak words that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy
- They must also communicate love
- Paul describes the nature of love
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**
- Suppose I responded to Kelly’s untrue statement by saying, ‘If you were worthy of my attention, I would give it!’
- That would be a very unkind thing to say, right? Not loving her
- Listen, there is a way to say everything God wants us to say to others that is right and loving
- And if we will yield our hearts to God and think about what we say before we speak, then our words will be words of life, hope, joy, grace, mercy, peace, and love
- Someone might be thinking, ‘If I have to do that before I speak, I might not be able to say anything!’
- Yep! And that is probably what should happen
- It would be better to be silent than it would to open your mouth and speak words of poison
- Trust in God and His Word
- Ask Him to help you control your unruly tongue
- Take every thought into captivity – speak words of truth and love
- And then out of you will flow rivers of living water
- While many in the world seem to desire the bitter waters that do not produce life, someone around you is spiritually thirsty and your words of truth and love might be exactly what they need
- **Pray**