

Family Devotion #15

Read

James 3: 5-12

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.

Say

We all know the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." And we all know that statement is untrue because we have been on the receiving end of harsh words that have deeply wounded and stayed with us. We can also remember saying things we should not have and regretting them.

In verse 6, James compares our tongue to a fire. He illustrates that our tongue, a very small part of our body, can have enormous impact on us and others. James uses strong words like unrighteousness, a restless evil, and a deadly poison to signal a warning about our tongues. They tell us that words are powerful and can cause devastation. In a span of a day, we can use our words to encourage others and sing their praises. Then a few moments later, we're comfortable gossiping or criticizing another person. James 3:10 says, "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so." Let's reflect on the phrase, "ought not to be so": Of all of God's creation, God gave humanity the unique gift and ability to speak. Hurtful words were not a part of God's original plan. Words were meant to be life-giving and not life-taking. God's first words in the Bible were used to bring life and light to the universe.

Our words reveal something about us. They are an indicator of what is going on in our hearts. Matthew 15:18 says, "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person." Why are we so angry? Why are we so quick to criticize? Why do we lash out? Perhaps our words are pointing to a deep bitterness that we have in our hearts, and rather than forgiving and letting go, we tend to sit and sulk. So what do we do? We get on our knees and bring it to Jesus. We open up the Bible and let his powerful words transform us, correct us, encourage us and heal us. Then we pray and ask the Lord to help us use our words to heal and not to hurt.



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Talk About

- When is a time someone said something hurtful to you? How did that feel?
- Has there ever been a time when you said something hurtful to someone else? What caused you to do this?
- Is there someone in your life who could use encouragement? Send them a message, write them an email or a letter (something we never do anymore), and encourage them. Or tell them!
- Take a moment to thank each person in your family and make sure to tell each person what you appreciate about them.

Pray

Lord, we confess that we are careless with our words. And we often don't think about the impact they can have on others. Help us to be aware of the things that come out of our mouth and not make excuses for them. Strengthen us with your Word. Teach us to be a blessing and an encouragement to others with our words. Thank you Lord for being our very present help in times of need. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

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