

Faith in Action - James

[James 3:1-12](#)

"Watch Your Mouth" – September 27, 2020

Introduction

There is no question that we use a lot of words each day which means we may begin to think that words aren't that big of a deal, that our words are inconsequential. But our words do matter and in James 3:1-12, we begin to see why.

Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response. To help, use [Psalm 119:33-40](#) as a prayer for God to open His word up to you.

Sermon Outline

- I. We answer to God for our words. ([3:1-2](#))
- II. Words have the power to give life. ([3:3-4](#))
- III. Words have the power to destroy. ([3:5-8](#))
- IV. Words reveal the heart. ([3:9-12](#))

Read & Discuss

1) Read [3:1-2](#)

Though we *all* give account for our words (including the careless ones – [Matt. 12:36](#)) those who teach, anyone who says to others, "the Bible says..." will be judged with greater strictness. In light of that, we should not shy away from teaching the truths of God's word, but be sober-minded and careful to say *what* God says in His word. In light of this we should not only be careful with God's word ourselves but pray for those who teach that God is honored and those they teach would be helped.

2) Read [3:3-5](#)

Words can bring life. Read [Genesis 1-2](#) and see what the life-giving power of God's words look like. The purpose of our words should reflect God's purposes for His words – to honor God, to bless, to build up in love and to give life. Would you say your words give life to those around you? Are your words peacemaking, loving and life giving? How can we know what words that give life look like? Take a moment to read [Ephesians 4:29](#). Notice the three things he highlights for life-giving speech – it's *content*, *timing*, and *purpose*.

- 1) The content of life-giving speech is the truth of God's word – only truth will build someone up. Is what you're about to say or send *true*?

2) The timing of life-giving speech matters ('fits the occasion'). It's not enough to have something *true* to say – we need to ask if the time is right? (see [Proverbs 27:14](#) and [15:23](#))

3) The purpose of life-giving speech matters. Paul says the purpose should be to 'give grace to those who hear.' Is what you're about to say helpful for *them* or for *your convenience*?

*Another exercise to help here is to read Proverbs and note the verses that talk about speech. Meditate on those verses and the idea of life-giving speech will come into focus. To help, [check out this sermon on our speech from Proverbs](#).

3) Read [3:5-8](#)

We have the tendency to excuse sinful speech as if it's a respectable sin, not that big of a deal. James' direct, hard-hitting words here are a wake-up call for us. If Genesis 1-2 shows us God's purpose for speech, Genesis 3 shows us Satan's purpose speech. The self-centered choice of words (when we put self before God and others) tears down rather than builds up. James reminds us no human being can tame the tongue so that if/when the tongue is tamed it is by the mercy and grace of God.

4) Read [3:9-12](#)

From Matthew 12, we learned that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. James imagines the church gathering to sing praises to God only to leave and use those same mouths to destroy those around them. James says this should not be so. Ask yourself:

- Is my speech marked with harsh anger, being critical or bitter? ([Proverbs 15:1](#), [29:22](#), [19:11](#))
- Does controversy or quarrels follow me around? ([Proverbs 26:21](#))
- Do I mislead people and lie to make myself look better? ([Proverbs 6:19](#), [26:24-28](#))
- Do I listen to or share in gossip? ([Prov. 16:27-28](#))
- Am I humble and approachable or proud and defensive with my words? ([Proverbs 14:3](#))

Thankfully we don't have to stay in that cycle because God continues to speak today and his words bring life. We all stumble in many ways, but Jesus never stumbled and He alone is our help – as we turn to Him, he binds our wounds and can begin the work of taming our tongue.

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

*Next week's sermon text: we turn to James 3:13-18 "Wisdom From Above Or Below?"
--