

JAMES: FINDING A FAITH THAT WORKS

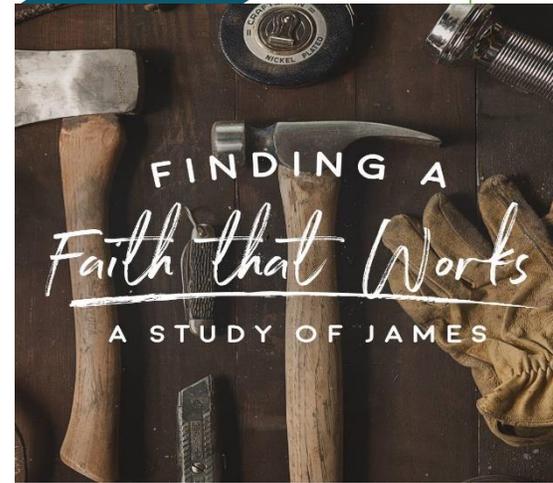
Lesson 6 – Faith Controls Our Words – James 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION/THOUGHTS

- How much do you think that you talk during a day? A week? A life?
- On average, a person's words would fill a 50-page book per day. That is 132 different books of 200 pages in length. It is estimated that we spend 20% of our waking hours speaking.
- That is a lot of words! To think about it according to James 3, that is a lot of opportunity to bless or cursing (James 3:10).
- Think of how many words you hear in a day. Now, think of how those words drastically affect your day and your life.

James spends a significant portion of this chapter teaching of the power of our speech. God cares about our words!

Think of how Jesus used words to teach, minister, move, express care, rebuke, encourage. Much of the recorded history we have about Jesus are the words that He spoke.



WORDS ILLUSTRATED

Before we examine the teaching points here, let's examine the illustrations used.

Vs. 3 – **A Horse's Bit** – small and seemingly insignificant, yet it harnesses power and direction

Vs. 4 – **A Ship's Rudder** – a massive ship can be guided safely or shipwrecked by one small piece

Vs. 5-6 – **A Fire** – the effects of our words can spread, consume, and destroy all around them

Vs. 7-8 – **A Tamed or Untamed Beast** – out of control and unleashed it can wreck a life

Vs. 8 – **A Poison** – no matter how it is introduced it can destroy the whole

WORDS MATTER

Vs. 1-2 – **Words show the progress of our faith.**

The importance of our words does not simply rest on the results of our words. Our words are a display of our faith in Christ.

For in many things we offend all. – The word *offend* in vs. 2 means to “stumble, fall, err, transgress.” So the verse is not saying that we “offend everyone else in many things.” Rather, it is saying that “we all stumble in many ways.”

If any man offend (stumble) not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. – The tongue is a hard thing to tame. In fact, **controlling how we speak and speaking in a way that is submissive to the Holy Spirit is a sign that we have significantly advanced in our spiritual growth.**

- **The work of controlling the tongue takes us into the root of all that is wrong with us... our hearts!** – Matthew 12:34, Proverbs 4:23, Luke 6:45 – God cares deeply about our words because they are deeply connected to our hearts.

We can fake things to a certain extent, but eventually in some way our words reveal our hearts.

Vs. 3-8 – **Words are powerful.**

- The power of our words can direct aspects of our lives.
- The power of our words can affect other people's lives.

Vs. 9-12 – **Words reflect our thoughts and choices.**

According to the text, with our words we can...

Bless God

Curse men (who were created in the image of God)

James has already warned that a double-minded man is unstable, and he teaches us that a mouth that can breath out blessings and cursing ought not to be so.

If a Christian finds that they can speak blessings and sweet encouragements, but turn around and speak aggressively and harm others, they can be confident that something is wrong!

Vs. 11-12 – **Harmful words pollute our gracious words.** Negative words can make our positive words of no affect.

WORDS CAN REVEAL AN IDENTITY CRISIS IN OUR HEARTS.

Do we have a need to be seen as something other than what Christ desires us to be?

If you build your identity on anything other than Jesus Christ, your words will be hateful, boastful, or proud.

FAMILY DISCUSSION / PERSONAL STUDY

The Book of James teaches us that true faith reveals itself by works. What we do in our Christian life is fueled by what we believe.

Take time together as a family in God's Word. Think throughout the day to reinforce the main truth of the week. Remember significant ways God has worked in your lives.

TAKE TIME

Read James 3:1-12 - highlight or underline each illustration in the same color.

THINK

Which of the illustrations in chapter 3 stood out most vividly to you? Why?

Which of the illustrations most revealed problems with your own words?

Could you say that how you have spoken to people this week reveals the progress of your faith in your life? How?

REMEMBER

If you have children, discuss with them what their first words were.

If you are a couple, discuss the first words you remember speaking to each other and how they affected you.

How does learning to speak drastically change the life of a child or family?

Have you personally felt the power of words that bless? Explain...

Have you recently used your words to comfort and bless? Explain...

*Make a plan this week to speak to someone and encourage them in Christ. Make a plan to use your words for good.