



James

How to Live the Christian Life!

Living with Your Words

James 3:1-12

Message #6 of 12 – S663

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Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Living with Your Words

James 3:1-12

Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 3**
- Today, we continue our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- Something my son Philip would tell you that I am fond of saying is, “Words are important”
- Words are powerful – God created everything in the universe by speaking it into existence
- God created the universe with words
- Jesus controlled demons, and the wind and waves with words
- He healed people, even raised them from the dead with words
- Most people use thousands of words every day
- Most studies suggest that women use more words than men
- Though I recently heard the reason for that is because they usually have to repeat themselves to the men in their life - #What?
- Words have the power to build up and to tear down, to encourage or discourage, to bless or to curse
- Words are important – so important , in fact, that we are going to someday have to explain every word we have uttered **Matthew 12:36-37**

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.

- And to live this thing we call the Christian life, we need to learn how to live with our words
- If you are able and willing to do so, please stand as we read today’s text as a sign of reverence for God’s Word
- Read **James 3:1-12**
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Living with Your Words**

- James is an awesome book – he covers things that every single person has to deal with in their lives
- And today He is going to have us focus on the most powerful muscle in the human body – the tongue
- The tongue is not physically strong – but the power that this small member exerts is absolutely staggering
- James starts this chapter by warning people who are thinking about using their words to teach others
- Point one – **Warning to would-be teachers!**
- **James 3:1-2**
- The Christian church is growing – about 11-15 years after Christ ascended
- It needed people to step up into the role of teacher
- Teachers wield great power – they have the power to shape the minds of their students
- This makes being a teacher attractive to those who are hungry for power = selfish ambition
- James says three things about this important role in the church
- ‘not many of you...’ First thing about teachers – **Be what you are gifted and called to be**
- Not everyone is gifted to be a teacher and even fewer are called to be teachers in the church **Ephesians 4:11**
And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...
- Not only should they be gifted and called – Second thing – **Be warned**
- ‘we shall receive a stricter judgment’
- Teachers in the church will be judged for what they teach – whether their teaching drew people to God or away from God
- Their lives will also be judged against what they teach – no hypocrisy
- Hypocrisy in a teacher in the church is even worse than other Christians, because of their influence on others
- Third thing – **We all stumble in words**
- None of us is perfect, but if you don’t have some measure of control over your tongue, you shouldn’t be a teacher

- James also makes an important connection here, if you can control your tongue, you will be able to control the whole body
- The tongue is so powerful that it affects our whole life, if we could control it, we would be perfect
- The reality is though, that we can't control the tongue
- It is almost as if it has a mind of its own
- Our second point – **The Intrinsic Power of the Tongue**
- **James 3:3-5**
- James uses three illustrations of the power of the tongue
- First he compares it to a horse – a very powerful animal, but a small bit in its mouth and a small person can control it
- The second example is a ship, the strength of the ship, even as it is driven by the fierce winds, is turned by a relatively small rudder
- His third example – a little fire
- Smokey Bear has been teaching us for decades that a little campfire can burn down a whole forest of trees
- Massive wildfires have been started with discarded cigarettes
- The book of proverbs has a lot to say about our tongue and words

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

- Your words and tongue control your life
 - So if you want a better life, we need to control our tongue better
 - But there is one problem with that
 - Third point for today – **The uncontrollable power of the tongue**
 - **James 3:6**
 - ‘tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity’ or unrighteousness
 - And because of the way it is set in our lives, it defiles our whole lives
 - It has the power to burn lives to the ground **R. Kent Hughes**
- Those who misuse the tongue are guilty of spiritual arson.**
- ‘it is set on fire by hell’ – Gehenna – or Valley of Hinnom – outside Jerusalem
 - It was where the trash of the city was dumped and burned
 - It was a foul disgusting place with maggots and the smell of putrefying and burning waste

- It became a picture of the place of eternal judgment **Mark 9:47-48**
And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

- James is saying that is the source of the stuff that sometimes comes out of our mouth – not a pretty picture

- **James 3:7-8**

- Virtually every kind of animal has been tamed – Killer whales, Cobras, hawks

- I even heard that someone managed to train a cat – but I’m not convinced – I think the video was faked

- ‘But no man can tame the tongue’

- ‘an unruly evil’ – unruly = unstable, restless – like a wild animal

- ‘full of deadly poison’ – verbal cyanide

- Remember, he is talking to people in the church

- There were probably people who were spreading ‘deadly poison’

- Every church seems to have to deal with ‘toxic people’

- Seems like every time they talk it is: gossip, innuendo, criticism, meanness, sarcasm, boasting, complaining, blasphemy, or slander

- Oh they justify their toxic behavior, but all the while people around them are being poisoned by their words

- Toxic people - spreading deadly poison – are not loving their neighbor – whatever their justification might be **1 John 4:7-8**

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

- I have seen more damage done in the church by so-called spiritual people, not loving their neighbor and spreading toxic words

- That is not how the church should be

- Our fourth and last point – **The revealing power of the tongue**

- **James 3:9**

- With our tongue we bless God = praise Him, give thanks to Him, speak well of Him

- And then we turn around and curse people with toxic or fiery words

- People made in the image of God = all people

- James is trying to reveal how out of order this is

- **James 3:10**
- Something is wrong if with our mouth, both blessings and curses come out
- Goes on to say that it reveals something about us
- **James 3:11-12**
- Even nature proves that an unruly tongue is not right
- This is very similar to something that Jesus said **Luke 6:43-45**
For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
- If blessings and poisonous words come out of the same mouth = a problem in the heart
- James has painted a pretty hopeless picture here – tongue is an unruly beast set on fire by hell that cannot be tamed
- He’s right – humanly speaking there is nothing we can do
- Turn to **Isaiah 6**
- I would like to give you a few quick things to tame your tongue
- First – you need a **Fresh encounter with God**
- **Isaiah 6:1-4**
- Isaiah is given a vision of the throne room of God
- Part of our problem as humans, is that we often focus on ourselves
- When we do that, it is not easy to see our weakness
- It is hard to see those things that are impacting your faith in a negative way
- It can be hard to see that your life is not glorifying God and might be harming others
- Regularly, we need to turn our eyes upon Jesus, look full into His wonderful face
- Open His Word and ask Him for a fresh encounter with Him
- Because something happens when we get a glimpse of Jesus
- **Isaiah 6:5**
- The second thing you need is an **Open Heart with God**
- Upon seeing God’s glory, Isaiah saw his own sins more clearly

- And because his heart was open to God, Isaiah didn't like what he saw in his own heart, and what was coming out of his lips
- And Isaiah knew that God didn't like what was in his heart
- But a work was going on in Isaiah's heart and God responds to it
- **Isaiah 6:6-7**
- Isaiah is grieved over what the fresh encounter with God reveals about himself
- The third thing we need is a **Heart broken by God**
- Upon seeing the perfection of God's glory, Isaiah's heart is broken over the imperfections of his own heart and he repents and confesses his sins
- And one of the seraphim responds by touching a coal from the altar to his lips – and announces Isaiah's cleansing from sin
- There is just one more thing that Isaiah needs
- **Isaiah 6:8**
- **Would like the worship team to come up and help me to close this service.**
- Isaiah has this radical new encounter with God, and because his heart is open to God, it is broken over his sin, and God in His grace heals Isaiah's broken heart
- Then God gives Isaiah a purpose
- The last thing we need is a **Heart yielded to God**
- It is as if Isaiah is saying, Lord, I am willing to do, go, and say whatever you want from me
- James says that no one can tame their tongue – but God can – if we yield our lives to Him
- I would like to invite you to have a fresh encounter with God
- We have looked into His Word
- There are few sections of the Bible that are as convicting to most people as this one
- I am going to ask you to do something and for some of you this might feel a little strange – please just bear with me
- I would ask that there is not a lot of moving around – this is time for us all to get real with God

- I would like everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes
- The worship team is going to play a song
- While they play – imagine yourself in the throne room of God
- And based on what you heard today – open your heart to God
- Ask Him if there is anything there that He doesn't like
- Let Him break your heart over that sin – especially the sins of the tongue
- Ask Him to cleanse you of it – to touch the coal to your lips
- And then you yield your whole life to Him
- After the song, I will pray and close the service
- Keep your eyes closed and let the Holy Spirit do a fresh work in you right now!
- Play: **Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus**
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- Amen
- **Pray**

May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.

Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21