

# DAILY DOSE OF JAMES



## Monday July 19

### Words... Do you speak them carefully or carelessly? (James 3: 1-2)

1: *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

2: *We all stumble in many ways.*

*If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

We are all familiar with the scenario when we hear ourselves say something and immediately think... "What was I thinking... why did I say \_\_\_\_\_?" It is difficult to truly hear our words and then it is even more challenging to see the negative impact they can have on others... "we all stumble in many ways" (v. 2).

What does it mean for a person to "keep his whole body in check?" (v. 2c) In part, it means to be careful with all areas of life but especially in the area of word choices – constructive or critical, careful or careless, truth-grounded or evil-minded? James 1: 26 says, "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."

Word choices are not be a careless matter, they are to be carefully chosen so that they produce life in others and not destroy life in others. Those in leadership positions (such as teaching) should exhibit consistent maturity in this area, because their words have a larger ripple into the community in which they speak. May it be said of all of us, that we seek to be a people seeking to learn from our stumbling, so that we can stand more steadily "keep(ing) (our) whole body in check."

"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12: 18).

### Life Application Questions:

What do you think the Holy Spirit would seek to teach you in this area?

Do you learn from your stumbling moments of hurtful words towards others?

... For you, what words should be put on the "do not say list?" To avoid hurting others...

... For you, what words should be put on the "do say list?" To encourage & equip others...

## Tuesday July 20

### Words... How well do your words display the direction of your life? (James 3: 3-4)

3: *When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.*

4: *Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.*

Too often we do not realize the "ripple effect" words have in the lives who hear them. Words we hear and words we speak turn our lives in both subtle and direct ways. Jesus makes a statement in Matthew that is humbling for all of us to read, "For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matt 12: 34b). The words we speak reveal what is in our heart, the direction

or lack of direction our life is headed. "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov 18: 21).

As we read in James, just as a large ship is given direction by a very small rudder, so too our tongue reveals what is in our heart and what truly steers our life. "As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man" (Proverbs 27: 19). When our life transitions out of "running from the truth" and now seeks to "run the race of life in the truth", it produces a righteous heart by grace and not a rebellious heart. When Jesus is asked, "'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'" Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt 22: 36-40). In short, if you have not changed your rebellious heart to live in His righteousness, then the words you speak will steer both your life and others in the wrong direction. If you seek to live in His truth daily, through a personal relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit guides your words, actions and life in a way that is not directionless but directional. Careless words can lead to a directionless life.

Careful words can lead to a directional life.

Whether we like it or not, words reveal the heart... may we allow Him to change our heart daily, so that our lives would live in the direction that builds life rather than destroys life.

### **Life Application Questions:**

How have you seen words others speak or you speak, reveal the direction or lack of direction in life?

When has the Holy Spirit humbled you to use your tongue in a more healthy way and not hurtful?

What Scripture(s) can you meditate on to bring about the right fruit in your word choice area of life?

## **Wednesday July 21**

### **Words... Reveal the heart & hurtful words produce a "fire" that is hard to put out (James 3: 5-6)**

*5: 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.*

*6: The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body.*

*It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

We see again, how careful we must be with words that we speak.

In being careful, maturity develops when we "keep (our) whole body in check" (James 3: 2).

In being careless, we learn here that our careless words can start "fires" that are hard to put out.

In fact, one small spark can set "the whole course of his life on fire." Such words that are evil, find their source not in the treasury of heaven but rather in the trappings of hell. Too often to impress others we are careless with our words and it costs us in our character, in our ability to show Christ-likeness and in our sense of community. Each time we choose words from hell and not from heaven, we allow a door of destruction to be opened to our closest community: spouse, children, family, friends, work/colleagues.

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov 15: 1). "Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips" (Eccles 10: 12). "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity" (Prov 21: 23).

Are you a "fire-starter / arsonist" or are you a "fire-fighter / peacemaker" in life? When you rightly understand love, it impacts your life at the core and it is expressed most consistently through words.

"Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corin 13: 6-7).

### **Life Application Questions:**

What “fires” have you started that you need “to own” and ask forgiveness in ...& start putting out?

What words do you need to cease speaking because they are of hell and not of heaven?

What words do you need to create as part of your vocabulary to speak as a citizen of heaven?

## **Thursday July 22**

### **Words... Recklessly used leads to evil... Righteously used leads to enrichment (James 3: 7-8)**

*7: All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man,*

*8: but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

“He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin” (Proverbs 13: 3). The power of words can never be underestimated and Jesus explains it best when he says: “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12: 34b-37).

The tongue can certainly be a “reckless evil, full of deadly poison.” How so?

When someone gets hit physically, there can be a mark but over time in most cases it is healed without being recognized. When someone gets “hit” verbally, there can be a mark which lasts a lifetime because words are often deposited in the heart & mind. Words can certainly be used as “a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” The tongue cannot be tamed by man, but when the heart is changed by a personal relationship with a holy God – words can go from reckless to righteous, restless to restful and rebellious to repentant/teachable.

### **Life Application Questions:**

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, in what ways has the Holy Spirit helped you tame your tongue?

If you were to allow the Holy Spirit to set a goal for you in this area, what do you think He would say?

If others were to describe your “word-life” how do you think they would describe it?

## **Friday July 23**

### **Words... What does your “word-life” look like? (James 3: 9-12)**

*9: With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.*

*10: Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.*

*11: Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?*

*12: My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?*

*Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

...

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eccl 4: 29). “The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip” (Psalm 37: 30-31). When life is “on the right track,” we live in a perpetual position of praise / gratitude to God for how He has changed us, how He has redeemed us and we are excited for how He can use our life to redeem others into living “rightly.” “With the tongue we praise our Lord & Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness” (v. 9). When we become a citizen of heaven, through a personal relationship with Jesus

Christ, it changes our “word-life.” We are not to be double-minded “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?” (v. 11). No one likes a hypocrite, yet at times we allow ourselves to be a hypocrite by saying one thing and doing another. As it says in 1 John 3: 18-19, “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence.” The more we are at rest in His presence, the more we ask the Holy Spirit to “keep our whole body in check” (v. 2), the more we will learn from Him how to love with actions and in truth. The “end result” is a “word-life” that reflects I have been redeemed by the King of kings & Lord of lords. It is a life that speaks words carefully, not carelessly and because of it – it is a life that shows the world, the gospel changed me & it changes people! Jesus Christ, came to redeem sinners in need of a Savior and for those who place their trust in Him and walk in this newness of life, Jesus says “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8: 31-32).

**Life Application Questions:**

If you are in Christ, how has the Holy Spirit changed your “word-life” over time?  
How have you seen your “word-life” impact those around you & especially those closest to you?  
In holding to His teachings, how would they set you free? How does it set others free by healthy words?

When all is said and done, more is said than done... so make sure what you say is well done!

May we all hear the beautiful words from our Maker, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master’s happiness!” (Matt 25: 21).