

SERMON OUTLINE James 3:1-12

The Power of Our Words

THE OUTSIZED POWER OF OUR WORDS (3-4)

THE OUTSIZED POWER OF OUR WORDS TO DO HARM (5-6)

THE NEED FOR CAREFUL SPEECH (9-12)

THE DIFFICULTY OF CAREFUL SPEECH (2, 7-8)

EXTRA SCRUTINY FOR TEACHERS (1)

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

MAIN POINT

In short, James's argument is this: (1) Human speech, by its very nature, is more powerful than it seems like it should be. (2) In particular, speaking wrongly often does a great deal of harm. (3) For that reason, Christians need to be really careful about how we talk. (4) Being really careful in how we talk is really hard for everyone. (5) For all of these reasons, most people should not be teachers within the Church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were your thoughts on the text/sermon? What most stood out? How was it helpful? Confusing?
2. How have you experienced the power of words in something you've said or that's been said to you? Can you think of an outsized life-giving example? An outside pain-causing example?
3. Had you ever considered the fact that God has put an outsized amount of power into certain things (like words)?
4. What kind of negative speech is easiest for you to fall into? What kind has caused most harm in your life?
5. How intentional are you in the things you say? Is it easy for you to see the need to be careful? Do you resonate with James's description of how difficult it can be to tame the tongue?
6. What might it look like to give proper scrutiny to teachers? How are we doing that well at Grace? How could we grow in it?
7. In what way do you most clearly see the greatness of God in this passage?

AREAS OF APPLICATION

8. Love God with all you have. Let's do everything we can to develop hearts that are pleasing to God so that they will produce a continual stream of life-giving words...to our kids, spouses, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, and to the rest of the world.
9. Be slow to speak...especially as a teacher. One of the most consistent speech-themes of the Bible (including James) and obvious applications of this text is to talk less. Listen, listen, listen and then, when necessary, talk.
10. Carefully learn the kinds of things God means you to say. James's main charge is to avoid ungodly speech. But the rest of the Bible commands us to speak and tells us the kind of things we're supposed to say.
11. Let your words be intentional and with the aim of building up. Even when a correction or rebuke are necessary, the aim must be eventual uplifting.
12. First and most, talk the gospel. Tell people of Jesus and the good news that He can rescue them from their sin and reconcile them to God and do all of that in confidence since we know that God has infused those words with sufficient power to save.
13. What is one specific thing you mean to do differently in the power of the Spirit as a result of the things you saw or heard in this text or sermon?

PRAYER POINTS

14. Adoration. Praise God for only speaking that which is good, beautiful, and true. Praise Him for continually speaking words of life. Praise Him for being merciful and gracious.
15. Confession. Confess your speech sins to God. Confess ways you've torn down rather than built up.
16. Thanksgiving. Thank God for forgiveness for your sins of the tongue and every other sin in Jesus. Thank God for revealing the kinds of speech that lift up and give life.
17. Supplication. Ask God to heal speech-wounds. Ask God to help our church to avoid gossip and slander, while rightly addressing unrepentant sin where we find it. Ask God to grant us all the will and strength to speak in light of the gospel.