

THE POWER OF WORDS AND SPEECH

James 3:1-12

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- Have you ever regretted saying something as soon as you'd said it? Why did you regret it? What emotions led you to say it in the first place?
- Recall a time someone's words really impacted you. Maybe it was a powerful speech or a sermon; maybe it was inspirational words from a teacher or loved one. Why were those words meaningful to you? What was going on in your life at the time? What choices or changes did you make because of them?

Communication is tricky, with or without the assistance of technology. It's possible to speak too little or speak too much, say things we don't mean and not mean the things we say or not speak at all when we really should speak up! Considering how confusing it can be and how easy it is to dismiss the impact of our words, it's no surprise that James takes the time to warn Christians about the treacherous yet powerful terrain of communication as he continues his quest to stress the importance of consistency between our life and our faith.

Reflection

- Have you ever thought intentionally about how you speak, whether it be your choice of words or your style of speech? What values informed your thought process and decisions? Are those values consistent with the values James presents?
- In segment 2, Dave Bast talks about making evaluation of our speech a regular part of our own self-examination for confession. Consider committing to try this for a day, a week, or even an hour using the questions Dave presented: *Have I said something to someone, or have I said something about someone to someone else that I need to confess before God? Did I give empty words when I could have met a tangible need?* After the exercise, reflect: What do you observe about yourself and about your communication? Did the knowledge of doing the exercise impact your choices?
- Reflect on the style of speech and type of words you use during times of worship (whether your own, scripted liturgies, or scripture). How is it different than your daily communication? Are there aspects of your worship speak that you should carry into daily life? Similarly, are there aspects of daily life you should really be bringing to the Lord in worship (what keeps you from doing so)?

Related Passages

- **Matthew 5:21-24**
- **Ephesians 4:17-5:20**

Conclusion

Read and remember Isaiah 6:5-6. Like Isaiah, confess, receive the Lord's absolution, and allow yourself to grow in relationship and service to him.

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