



What Is In a Word



BIG IDEA

Words have power. They shape how we see ourselves, how others see us, and even the direction of our lives. James reminds us that what flows out of our mouths is a symptom of what fills our hearts, so the answer is not just watching our words, but filling our hearts with Jesus.



ICE BREAKER

1. Who is a teacher, coach, or speaker whose words have stuck with you? What did they say?
2. Have you ever said something and wished you could take it back the moment it left your mouth?
3. What is a phrase someone said to you growing up, good or bad, that you still remember?



MAIN POINTS

Words are small, but they set the course of our lives. James compares the tongue to a bit in a horse's mouth, a rudder on a ship, and a spark that sets a forest on fire (James 3:3-6). Each is small, yet each directs something much larger. Pastor DJ pointed out that to have an uncontrolled tongue is to have an uncontrolled life. We all know "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me" is false, and James also warns that those who teach and use their voice to influence others carry a heavier responsibility (James 3:1). In a world where everyone has a platform, what we say matters more than ever.

Praise and cursing should not come from the same mouth. "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness" (James 3:9). James asks whether fresh water and salt water can flow from the same spring, and the answer is no. It is easy to sing praises and cry at the feet of Jesus on Sunday and then slip back into gossip, harsh words, or negative self-talk on Monday. Our words build up or tear down in our marriages, our families, our friendships, our social media, and even in the way we speak to ourselves, and James says, "Not so with us."

Our words reveal the condition of our heart. Jesus said, "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Luke 6:45). Words are a symptom, not the root problem, much like an argument over money is often really about something deeper, such as dishonesty, pride, or even a gambling problem. Hurtful words spoken to us can fill our hearts with lies that last for years, and our own hurtful words usually reveal a mess inside us that needs attention. So the real question is not only "What am I saying?" but "What has my heart been filled with?"

Fill your heart with Jesus, the living water. We are constantly filled with other people's opinions, lies, media, and wounds, and we cannot clean that out on our own. Jesus offers water that never runs dry: "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed,

	the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). We fill our hearts with Him by praying, reading His Word, and staying in community with people who encourage us. As we do, shame and lies lose their grip, and we become people whose words leave others filled, not drained.
 DISCUSS	1. Why do you think James uses a bit, a rudder, and a spark to describe the tongue? 2. If you graded your speech in different areas (marriage, family, friends, gossip, social media, self-talk), which would be the hardest to look at honestly? 3. Why is it so easy to praise God on Sunday and slip into gossip or harsh words on Monday? 4. What does the way you have been speaking lately reveal about what your heart has been filled with? 5. What would it look like to fill your heart with Jesus this week through prayer, Scripture, and community?
 NEXT STEP	Jesus First: For the next seven days, read James 3:1-12 first thing every morning, and say it out loud so that it becomes the first words you speak that day. People Always: Be someone whose words leave people filled, not drained. Speak encouragement to someone this week, and if you have an issue with someone, go directly to them instead of talking about them behind their back. Made for More: Get into community with people who will encourage you and pick you up. Name any lie that has been spoken over you and replace it with what God says is true about you.
 SCRIPTURE	James 3:1-12 Luke 6:45 John 4:13-14 James 1:26
 NEXT WEEK SNEAK PEAK	Join us next weekend as Pastor Shan continues our Faith That Works series in James with "Submission to What Matters Most" from James 4:7-8. Invite someone to join you and don't miss the journey ahead!

Questions or Feedback? Email Groups@CentralAZ.com