



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

STICKS AND STONES
DEFECTS OF THE TONGUE (JAMES 3:1-12)
OCTOBER 21, 2018

SERMON OUTLINE

We are heaven's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20)

Our Words are Sacred (Genesis 1:3-5)

Filthy Language/Unwholesome Talk (Colossians 3:8)

Obscene and shameful speaking reflecting low culture

Slander (Colossians 3:8)

To speak falsehoods about someone you hold in low regard.

Lie (Colossians 3:9)

To make a false statement in order to deceive or protect a wrongdoing.

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

Those in Christ are called to control their speech in order to build one another up, rather than hurt one another with gossip and slander.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Share with the group about a time when you spoke too soon, said something in anger, or intended to be funny and your words fell flat.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

2. Make a list of the ways you can think of that people sin with their speech.

Leader: Everyone struggles with sin. Some sins may be more specific to certain people. Not everyone will deal with an addiction to alcohol or drugs. Though all lie, not everyone has a huge problem with being dishonest. Yet, every one of us has gotten into trouble at some point for the things we have said. All of us have put our foot in our mouth. We all have gossiped, unhelpfully criticized, condescended, or said something crude. The tongue is a great indicator of our spiritual health. Because of this, James devoted a whole section of his letter to address the relationship between our faith and our words.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 3:1-8](#)

3. According to James, what does the tongue reveal about our hearts and our minds?

Leader: The tongue says only what the mind tells it to say. Speech is like a thermometer; it shows a person's spiritual temperature. Spiritual transformation produces transformed behavior. And transformed behavior involves new speech, speech that reflects the nature of the One who indwells believers. James said that the tongue has such great power to control that if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man.

4. The word "perfect" in verse 2 could also mean mature. What do our words have to do with being a mature person?

Leader: The Greek word translated "mature" can mean perfection, or being without error or flaw. The word also can mean "complete" in the sense of maturity. That's how James used the word here. Believers can never be perfect as Jesus is perfect, including perfection in speech. However, they have a spiritual heart that expresses itself in honorable speaking and teaching. In other words, believers who are grown up spiritually control their tongues with God's help. James went on to say that the Christian who controls his tongue is also able to control his whole body. The word "body" here likely refers to a person's whole being. The point is that if we control our tongues, then controlling all else follows. If God's Spirit has firm control of our tongues, then the rest of

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

our lives are more susceptible to His control as well. When the believer speaks God-glorifying, Christ-honoring words, the rest of his or her life is more spiritually healthy, too.

5. Our speech has the power to direct and to destroy. What analogies did James use to describe this power? When do you first remember seeing the power words could have?

6. How have you experienced your tongue making a big impact, either positively or negatively?

Leader: A small piece of stainless steel placed in the mouth controls the power of an enormous animal. A small mechanism on the back end of a ship guides the entire vessel through the water. A small spark can ignite a flame that burns down a city. Such is the power our tongues have to give life or to bring death. Satan led Eve into sin through his words. The saying, “sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me” is a good reply to an insult, but holds less truth than we wish to believe. If anything, words are more painful than physical hurt because words reach us at our core and stay with us forever. With such power to direct and destroy, we need to be more careful in our speech.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 3:9-12.

7. We have considered some of the negative consequences of speech given by James. What power do our words have for delight? What are some of the positive effects of speech given in these verses?

8. When we fill ourselves with grace, what impact should that have on how we speak to others?

Leader: Words have the power to give pleasure and delight to the one listening. It is a word from the Lord that saved us. Likely, you have words that have stuck with you because they continue to encourage you. The point of this section is that what we hear from the Lord should change and shape the way we speak. If Jesus is Lord of all, He is Lord of our words. We are called to use our words in a way that gratifies and brings honor to Him. We are to encourage and correct one another with gentleness, love, and respect. When our tongue is mastered by the Holy Spirit, our words become life-giving and delightful.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

9. What implications are there for our speech, if we are hidden in Christ? What implications are there for speaking with others, who are equally in need of God's grace?

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. What are some helpful words you know someone needs to hear you speak to them? When will you speak them?

11. What keeps us as a group from lovingly correcting each other when we know someone's words have hurt someone else? On a scale of one to ten (with ten being totally open and authentic), where are we as a group and how do we move the scale up?

12. Have there been words spoken that have hurt others that you need to fix? Who needs to hear better words in the days ahead (spouse, kids, coworkers)?

PRAYER

Thank God for the gift of words, particularly His Word that points us to love and truth. Ask God to help us control and tame our words so that we can bless Him and build one another up.

MEMORIZE

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. – James 3:2

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JAMES 3:1-12

3:1-12 In this section James continued to address the issue of misguided speech (2:16-18). The focus is on how errant teaching might adversely affect the congregation.

SERMON BASED GROWTH GROUP

3:1 Many people desire to be teachers because this is an important role in the church. Yet the proliferation of untrained teachers can allow false teachings to arise within congregations, leading some astray. Teachers receive a stricter judgment and should not be appointed carelessly.

3:2 The most difficult thing for a teacher to control is the tongue. Body (Gk *soma*) carries a dual meaning here. It refers to the physical body and the role the tongue plays in it, but it also refers to the body of believers in the synagogue and the influence that teachers have in it.

3:3-6 Like horse bits and ship rudders, the size of the tongue is disproportionate to the influence it holds. False teaching (expressed by "the tongue") is a world of unrighteousness. It pollutes the whole body (an individual or a congregation) and determines the destiny of all who follow it.

3:9-12 James pointed out the contradictory nature of the tongue. Out of the same mouth comes blessing of God and cursing of fellow humans who are made in God's likeness, a violation of the "royal law" (2:8).