

# Cultivate wisdom, not just words

*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. (James 3:5)*



"Words have a magical power. They can bring either the greatest happiness or deepest despair; they can transfer knowledge from teacher to student; words enable the orator to sway his audience and dictate its decisions. Words are capable of arousing the strongest emotions and prompting all men's actions."

"Civilization began the first time an angry person cast a word instead of a rock."

--Sigmund Freud

## 1. There is power in your words

*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 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. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 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. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. (James 3:1-5a)*

- Words are your most powerful tools. So God holds you accountable for them.

*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. (Matthew 12:36-37)*

- "Words form \_\_\_\_\_." Words determine the meaning we attach to things, and meanings define us.

## 2. Treat each word \_\_\_\_\_

*Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 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. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:5b-8)*

- In the Gatlinburg fire of 2016, one match scorched 17,000 acres, caused \$500M worth of damage, destroyed more than 2,000 buildings, injured 200 people and killed 14. One match. But words have far more power.
- Three areas where we must think hard before we speak:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Marriage: Therapist John Gottman can predict the future of your marriage by your \_\_\_\_\_

- c. \_\_\_\_\_: The narrative running through your mind can determine your entire future.

*“Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts become your words. Be careful of your words, for your words become your actions. Be careful of your actions, for your actions become your habits. Be careful of your habits, for your habits become your character. Be careful of your character, for your character becomes your destiny.”*

### 3. How to get your words right

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. (James 3:9-12)*

- Want to know what's in my heart? Just listen to my words.
- Curses (how not to use your words)

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- Blessings (how to use your words)

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- A great little test (complements of Rotary International):

(1) Is it true? (2) Is it fair to all concerned? (3) Will it bring good and better friendship? (4) Will it benefit all concerned?

### 4. Heavenly wisdom brings real peace

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:13-18)*

- Perform a \_\_\_\_\_ on your heart:

Is my heart envious and motivated by selfishness? Do not boast or lie about it.

Is my heart pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere? Seek wisdom and find a harvest of goodness.

*To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!*  
(Proverbs 15:23)