

# Words Matter

## Բաներու Ազդեցութիւնը

### James 3:1-12

Some say we speak between 7,000 to 20,000 words a day. Some believe women talk more, while others believe that is not scientifically proven. If you research this, you will find varying different results.<sup>1</sup> **The point is that we all talk.** Whether men or women, we talk, talk and talk. We love to talk. And you know it is a gift from God that humans can learn words, create new words and make meaningful sentences.

Young people text each other. For example, our children do not believe too much in talking on their phones. Do you know how many texts people send to each other? Over 560 billion texts are sent every month worldwide. 15,220,700 texts are sent every minute of every day worldwide. WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger combine for more than 60 billion messages sent every day. Text messaging is the most used data service in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Can you imagine the amount of information we are sending to each other?

The questions I would like to raise is: “Do we have anything important to say or write to each other? What are kind of words do we say or write?”

Words matter... There is power in speech. **Words can build or destroy.** Brother James already warned us in chapter 1 to be slow in speaking and quick in listening. In this chapter, James elaborates the topic of speech. Words are important.

#### 1. First, James addresses the teachers:

**Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.** (James 3:1ESV)

Not many people want to become teachers. In fact, in the US it is an underpaid job, which indicates how much we value this vocation.

James is warning the early church. He says, "Not many should be teachers if they are not ready to live it."

Paul singles them out as exercising one of the three most prominent ministries in the church, along with apostles and prophets. The teacher in the early church was entrusted with the crucial task of transmitting Christian doctrine (2 Tim. 2:2). Those who have been given the teaching 'gift' bear an awesome responsibility for their exercise of that gift in nurturing people in the faith.<sup>3</sup>

Often I am terrified when I will teach. It bears tremendous responsibility.

James is very clear: "for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." (3:1b)

This is very serious. Teaching His Word is a huge responsibility. We will face God and we are accountable for what we are doing.

Any teacher should be prepared by knowing the stuff that should be taught. **Great teachers** are those who have the knowledge and they demonstrate it in their life. **We teach by who we are, not just by what we say.**

## 2. Words matter... we communicate with words.

**For we all stumble (յաւցաւքնէր In Armenian) in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.**

Words, we use words daily. We all can fall in the trap of gossiping, saying bad words, and on and on.

Judge Sarkissian on his desk has a saying: "You don't have to explain what you meant, If you don't say it!"

-We apply to a job by writing a résumé.

-We use words in building intimacy; do you remember what words you used in describing your love?

-We use words in expressing our ideas, thoughts, sermons, essays, discoveries, opinions.

-We write poetry by using words expressing love, joy, sorrow, pain, anger...

-We use words when remembering what our father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter said many years ago.

-We use words in court to defend ourselves.

Words matter... There is so much power in words.

James knows we are not perfect and we will fail. He adds: **And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man.**

We hear so many sad stories about bullying. Last year I heard a story about a young boy was bullied and, as a result, he killed himself.

We speak around 8 million words in our lifetime. That is a lot of words. What are we saying to each other?

Words can be either harmful or fruitful!

Please check yourself this morning. **Are you an edifier, encourager or a criticizer who always sees something wrong in people and situations?**

### **3. Words can lead us to the right or wrong directions.**

We need to discipline our words. How many times you said things about which you regretted and wished you had held your mouth...

James says:

**If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. <sup>4</sup>Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. (James 3:3-5)**

Two metaphors:

- a bit in the horse's mouth

- a ship's rudder

Both metaphors draw the picture of a huge thing (whether a horse or a ship) that can be directed to the **right destination.**

Tyndale commentary says: the tongue can determine the destiny of the individual.

Illustration: When I visited Lebanon I met former students from the Ainjar School. These twin brothers came to school. We raised them in Ainjar. Those kids had behavioral issues in the school. They were always in trouble. The worst thing was that some teachers told them: “You guys will never be someone.” Դուք մարդ պիտի չըլլաք: They saw me in Beirut after many years. They were successful restaurant owners in Lebanon. They said: “Badveli, you always encouraged us with your kind words when no one believed in us. Thank you for your words.”

Words can lead people to **despair (wrong direction)** or to **success with encouragement (right direction)**.

#### 4. Undisciplined tongue

Brother James adds a new metaphor: **an undisciplined tongue is like fire.**

**How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. (James 3:5-6)**

How do you stop bad words? How do you stop spreading rumors? How do you stop gossip? Once the word is out, you cannot catch it anymore, like a small fire that can burn thousand acres of land. In California, we see that happening every summer.

In the following verses, Brother James encourages us to tame the tongue, because the same mouth is cursing and praising God. That is not right.

Words... words matter...words are powerful. Let us go back in the Word of God

**-How about looking back to Genesis and seeing how words mattered to God.**

In the beginning, nothing was there... “and God said...” For six days, we see “God said...”

Words... God said and it was created...God filled the void. God spoke and the day and the night, the moon and the stars, light and darkness, waters and lands, animals eventually humans were created. Let there be LIFE!

These words were intended to tell us something **very true about the character and the nature of God. God fills voids. God brings life. God is the master artist who speaks and creates... Isn't this wonderful?**

**God brings something into being**, and then he affirms it. He adds value. He uses His words to bless. A.W. Tozer sums this part of God's character. He says, "**This word of God is the breath of God filling the world with living potentiality.**"<sup>4</sup>

### **-Satan spoke**

Genesis chapter 3 brings another reality, where words can deceive and destroy. When the Devil speaks, it destroys. **The serpent deceived humanity with words.** And it is like a domino effect. The blame game started each blaming the other for their disobedience to God. Until today, we play this game, **never taking responsibility of our sin and blaming someone else...**

Words matter: words can destroy or build; words can bless or curse; words can create or deceive and destroy.

### **5. Words are from your heart**

**With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.<sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?<sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. (3:9-12)**

How in the world from the same mouth come two kinds of words?

Double words, double values, double mind. The inconsistent, unstable wavering of the double-minded man (1:7–8), the double-minded man shows by the contradictory nature of his speech that his faith lacks focus and stability.<sup>5</sup>

Double mind, double heart. Something wrong with the heart.

**A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.** (Luke 6:45NIV)

The tongue, the mouth is where the words are uttered. But the tongue is actually just a muscle that is controlled **by our heart**, our innermost being.

-If you examine yourself and find that your words are destructive, *it means there is something wrong in your heart*. There are dark parts in your heart. Your heart needs cleansing. **James sees a person's speech as a barometer of his spirituality; it reveals what is in the heart.**

Jesus criticized the Pharisees and the Scribes because their heart was not cleansed. Jesus made a point that related with the people who looked at the outside. **"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me"** (Matthew 15:8NIV)

David Roper says:

"Our words are formed deep within in our hearts. Good words come from the good in us (*only Christ can do it*); evil words flow from the evil we have accumulated within (*when we don't allow Christ dominate on our mind*). If we want to deal with our tongues, we've got to get our minds right."<sup>6</sup>  
(*italics are my words*)

How do we get our heart right? How do we get healed? We all have "garbage" in our hearts. It should not come from same mouth two different kinds of words. How do we control our tongue, our words, our heart?

My answer is the same, ask Jesus to visit your heart. Come to Jesus, empty and poor. He will visit you and heal you. **And it takes time to be sanctified.** Salty and fresh water should not come from same place.

Solomon warns about the heart:

**“Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
For from it flow the springs of life.  
Put away from you a deceitful mouth,  
And put devious lips far from you.” (Prov. 4:23-24 NAS)**

There is a story attributed to Cherokee wisdom: One evening a grandfather was teaching his young grandson about the internal battle that each person faces. "There are two wolves struggling inside each of us," the old man said. "One wolf is vengeance, anger, resentment, self-pity, fear... "The other wolf is compassion, faithfulness, hope, truth, love..." The grandson sat, thinking, then asked: "Which wolf wins, Grandfather?" His grandfather replied, "The one you feed."

Paul says it best in the Word of God:

**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Phil 4:8ESV)**

Christians who have been transformed by the Spirit of God should manifest the wholeness and purity of the heart in consistency and purity of speech. (Tyndale commentary)

Please apply this coming week:

Think before you speak; ask yourself:

Is it true

Is it inspiring

Is it helpful

Is it necessary

Is it kind

Is it constructive

1. Study: Men Talk Just as Much as Women ([www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11762186](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11762186))
2. <https://www.textrequest.com/blog/texting-statistics-answer-questions/>
3. Tyndale Commentary (James)
4. AW Tozer: The Pursuit of God. - World Invisible, chapter 6: The Speaking Voice
5. Tyndale Commentary (James)
6. David Roper: Seeing God