

Did I Say That?  
James 3:1-12

Last week, Wesley began our September sermon series from the book of James. He spoke of how we are to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. It is a great description of the our life dance - Quick, slow, slow. Today, we continue to discover what James in his straightforward manner, has to say to us.

Last week, I took Andy to school, and my GPS indicated there was water to my left. All I could see was trees. Curiosity caused me to turn left at the light, wondering where this body of water was hiding. I drove all around the area that showed water on the GPS, but all I could see was an area of thick trees. I could see the closest point I could reach was a drive through the cemetery. I drove as close as I could get, then decided that I was off track. Surely, there were many other things that I needed to be doing. I asked the Lord why I was spending time trying to find water. But I decided to go with the Spirit's leading, and I got out of my car and walked down a path toward the tree line. But guess what I found there, in the middle of the path. A tall statue of Jesus with arms outstretched and a scripture underneath. "Come all ye who are heavy burdened, and I will give ye rest." I sat on the bench and wondered about God's leading, and how God knows just what we need, and when we need. I was lead not to physical water, but living water. It was a moment of joyfulness.

I tell you this story because some of the times in my life when I was impacted the most was when I heard a story that really touched me. Stories are a big part of our culture. We want to hear more stories whether real or fictional. We love stories because it allows us to be a part of someone else's life. We can feel their joy and struggle and hurts and successes. We can relate to stories that are similar to what we are going through in our lives or have experienced in our past. Stories are incredible at speaking to our emotions and have an impact on our life and how we live.

What I want to look at today is the fact that without one key ingredient to a story there would be no story. This ingredient makes the story come alive. It is what fills you with the emotion. That ingredient is the word. Without words there is no story only a blank page.

Our words not only impact us but they impact everyone around else. We take it for granted that the words we speak are such an incredible gift from God. The ability to communicate with each other is probably bigger than anything that has ever been invented. The word is so **simple** yet so incredibly **complex**. Words can **mend relationships** and **start wars**. Words can **express love** and **bring laughter** or words can **cause tears** and **anger**.

Our words are powerful. They carry weight that can bring people to their knees or make people feel like they are flying on cloud 9. And it is an incredible gift that God has given but it is also an incredible burden. Because we have to constantly be watching ourselves to make sure we use wise words.

Words basically have the power to do one of two things in our life - Words have the power to either damage or delight. And we get to choose which of these we will use in our life.

James 3:4-6 says, "A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds." It is the same with the words from our mouths – such a small part of our whole body, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it! You know it is so much easier to tear someone down than to build someone up. It feels good to get back at someone when they are mean to us, but our words, if we are not careful, can destroy relationships in a heartbeat.

There was a boy who was really having trouble at school, saying mean things. His father told him that each day, he was to go in the backyard and hammer a nail into the fence for each hurtful thing he had said that day to someone. Each afternoon, the boy would go outside and hammer nails. This went on for months, until one day, he came home from school and told his father that he was through. He had made the decision that saying mean things to people was not good, and that his Sunday school teacher had talked to them the last Sunday about how words can hurt people. The father told his son that he was proud of him, but that he still had one more thing to do. He was to go out to the fence and pull out each nail that was hammered into the wood. It took him hours and he finally came in the house just at dark, exhausted. The two went back outside and the father went behind the fence and shined a light through the many holes, as he walked along the fence. He explained that the holes represented the words spoken that could not be taken back. The damage had been done. And that in the future, he should use his words wisely.

How do you use your words in your everyday life? Do you use words that heal? Do you use words that help and give advice and encouragement and help lift a life or do you use words that hurt and tear down? Do you sometimes hear yourself say, "Did I say that?" Sometimes at our house, we say, "Oops, was that my outside voice?" The simple common sense truth is what goes into our mind is going to come out of our mouth. If we put negativity in our mind, harsh words, anger, bitterness, annoyances, pet peeves, if we let those things consume our mind than that is all that will come out of our mouth. Words are powerful.

Words can be used to delight. Through our words we can bring healing to people's lives. We can comfort them in their time of need. We can encourage them to keep fighting the fight and running the race. We can stand up for them when others put them down. We can let them know that everything will be okay.

One of the ways Christ offered healing was through words. Along with physical healing Christ spoke words which brought emotional and spiritual healing. Through peoples toughest times Christ forgave them. But that is not something that stopped with the original disciples. We are disciples today. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit, to continue to speak words of comfort, that offer healing.

I want to ask you a question that has to do with how words help us. How many of you have someone that is your person to go to in a time of need? When you are desperate and you need advice, how many of you have someone that just seems to always know what to say? It doesn't have to be right now but just sometime in your life you have had someone like that.

My dad was that person for me. From the earliest time I can remember, he was my rock in the wisdom department. I will be the first to admit that I sometimes irritated him with my many questions, especially those that he didn't think girls should be worrying about. Like how to build a things. He spoke words of instruction to help me build a playhouse, and much more. I don't have all the answers and I have to be humble enough in my life to take time to seek wisdom and guidance from those that have much more experience than myself.

We need people that have been down the road we are currently traveling in our lives, helping us get over the speed bumps. God's wisdom can be found in the counsel of another's person's words and those words will help us overcome any obstacle we will face. So my encouragement to you today is to find someone that can help hold you accountable that has overcome much in their life and that can help give you guidance and wisdom.

But the greatest and most important place to discover true wisdom -- the best place you could possibly go to find words that help is in God's love letter to us. God's word contains all the wisdom you need to overcome any obstacle that comes your way. The Bible can speak volumes to us on ways words may damage or delight.

I went through all of that only to come back to where I began. Words are powerful and when combined to form a positive story can be used to impact and transform our lives.

What story in your life has challenged you? What has caused you to examine your life, to think about who you

are and where you want to go and why you do what you do and if you are going down the right path. All of us have a life changing story. Your testimony whether you think it is boring or not is the most powerful sermon that can ever be preached. The book of James reminds us to use our words that bring glory to God. And we are blessed that God forgives us for the times we have spoken words of damage. So chose your words wisely, and let people hear your story.

Rev. Bonnie Osteen  
Associate Pastor