

Focus passage: James 3:1-12

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble 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. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 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. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 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. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

What stands out to you from this passage?

What do you think of the saying, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me?" Do you think it is true? Why or why not? Do you tend to give speech the same power James does here?

*What role did speech play in the Tower of Babel? **Read Genesis 11:1-9.***

What are words capable of doing, both for good or evil? Can you remember personal experiences in which someone's speech had great positive or negative affect on you? Do you have certain habits in the way you talk to others that may be doing more harm than good?

Have you ever had an emotional experience about which you could hardly speak out loud? You may have thought you could, that you were composed, but when you went to open your mouth, your emotions took the better of you? Why can we think through the words we want to say, but when we try to speak them, they seem to hold more power?

*Words have great power--whether written, preached, or just spoken simply to a neighbor. **Read Colossians 4:2-6 and Ephesians 4:29-32** and discuss what we can accomplish with our speech.*

How can you apply this Scripture to your life?

