

Lesson 5: The Words of a Leader¹

The Book of James

Scripture Passage: James 3

Growing Connected (10 min.)

Briefly go around sharing an area of life where you're considered a leader or a teacher. As a group, spend time thanking God for the responsibility to be leaders/teachers.²

Introduction (2 min.)³

Words are an essential part of communication.¹ Most people speak thousands of words a day in regular conversations. In addition to this, words are used through blogs, social media, podcasts, newsreels, songs, etc. Words through any medium inherently have a message. This means that human beings are constantly communicating in order to get a point across.

Yet, it's important to note that our words have the power to injure others. In artist Andy Mineo's song, "Still Bleeding," the chorus illustrates the pain that our speech can have on others:

*Like a car running into a brick wall
Is how your words crashed into my heart
What was so minor to you was so major to me
And all I wait for is words like "I'm sorry", "forgive me"
I'm still bleeding, I'm still bleeding*

We can all perhaps resonate with how hurtful words have impacted our view of ourselves, our view of God, and our view of others.

The Bible has much to say about the power of words, especially for leaders/teachers. For starters, the Word of God shows that God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, speaks the world into existence in the beginning (Genesis 1:3). Also, The Book of Proverbs puts great emphasis on speech in many of its pithy sayings mostly connected to King Solomon (i.e. Prov. 10:20-21, 14:3, 15:2, Prov. 18:13, 23:15-16). The Book of James is no different. In James 3, we will learn that:

Big Idea: A mature person, worthy of being a leader, can be identified by their speech.

¹ This statement was written to refer to normality of speech communication. Yet, we acknowledge that those who have speech-disabilities are equal image-bearers of God and may have other forms of communication. What is said about speech from a biblical perspective can be said of any form of communication in many cases.

PLAY VIDEO- PT. 1- Notes

Think Tank (30 minutes)

Review the lesson: In the lesson the teacher made a connection between leadership (which assumes maturity) and the use of words. In chapter 3, James makes great use of illustrations to give God's perspective on the importance of words in the life of a teacher/leader.

Partner Up in Zoom Breakout Groups and Discuss

1. Read James 3:1-18 out loud.
2. **Controlling one's words is evidence of a mature Christian worthy of being a leader/teacher.** In the ESV translation, verses 3-4 repeat the word "guide" to show how small objects direct big objects. This means that the way we use our words can set the trajectory of our lives, whether good or bad. In what area of life are you considered a teacher/leader? Why is this point especially important for teachers/leaders to know? What difference do our words have on the people we teach/lead?
3. **Our words must carry a sense of integrity in our actions.** James implies that Christians who destroy others with words are hypocritical and foolish (vs.10-12)! What habits should a leader/teacher have in order to cultivate integrity with words? What should a good leader/teacher do when they have identified hypocrisy/foolishness in their life and words?
4. **Wisdom, which is demonstrated by our words, produces good fruit in our relationships; especially peace.** According to verses 13-18, how do we know when our words are sourced from Satan/demons or from God?

PLAY VIDEO- PT. 2- Video Notes

Group Training

The teacher ended his lesson with this saying, “The tongue is a weapon that needs to be wielded in wisdom and in truth.” This means leaders/teachers must evaluate where they are before God and ensure that their words overflow from communion with Him.

Individual Activity (20 min.)⁴

Think about the tensions in the areas of life where you’re considered a leader/teacher. On a note or on a piece of paper, do the following three steps:

1. **Recognize Your Fruit:** Reread James 3:14-18. Write down the negative or positive fruit that you’re experiencing now as outlined in these verses? *I.e. jealousy, peace, etc...*
2. **Recognize Your Source:** Read James 3:15 & 17. Where is your fruit coming from? What cultivated that fruit in you? *I.e. I am experiencing jealousy because I can’t help but notice about how everyone on my Instagram seems to have a better life than me.*
3. **Recognize Your Savior:** Jesus Christ, our ultimate leader, can cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in you, but you must reflect on what he did for you. In what ways have you sinned with your words as a leader/teacher? How can your trust in Jesus change the way you use your words going forward in this situation?

Large Group Discussion (10 min.)

1. Why is it important to check your “Fruit, Source, and Savior,” especially as a leader/teacher?
2. When should a leader/teacher check “Fruit, Source, and Savior?” Why?
3. What kind of influence can a leader/teacher have on others with their words over time?

Training Session Wrap Up (2 min)

Summary: In this lesson we learned the following:

1. Controlling one's words is evidence of a mature Christian worthy of being a leader/teacher.
2. Our words must carry a sense of integrity in our actions.
3. Wisdom, which is demonstrated by our words, produces good fruit in our relationships; especially peace.

These principles are important to note because a mature person, worthy of being a leader, can be identified by their speech.

*Closing Prayer:*⁵ Ask someone in the group to pray that God would teach us how to use words wisely in the areas of life that we lead.