

How do We Change the Way We Talk to Each Other?

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Preacher: Jim Masters

[0:00] If you would take your Bibles and go to the book of James, James chapter 3, if you're visiting with us, you can pull out that black Bible in the chair in front of you and go to page, go towards the back, go to page 178, towards the back of that Bible, page 178, you'll find James 3. I'm going to start reading in verse 2 through verse 12. It's kind of like the springboard from the message I will give today, changing the way we talk to each other.

Again, James chapter 3, verses 2 through 12, page 178 in that black Bible, towards the back of that black Bible. James 3, 2 through 12. I'm going to read the passage and then we'll jump in.

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put the bits into the horse's mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great, and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a force is set aflame by such a small fire.

And the tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity. The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds of reptiles and creatures of the sea is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race, verse 8. But no one can tame the tongue.

It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

[2:22] My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?

Neither can salt water produce fresh water. Quote, DHS looks to ban jihad and other religiously charged words. End quote.

That was the title of the article from the Washington Examiner a week ago this past Friday. The article reads like this, the Department of Homeland Security has proposed banning quote-unquote religiously charged words like quote jihad within the department in the hopes of preventing people being attracted to violent extremist groups like the Islamic State.

A June 2016 report produced by the Countering Violent Extremism Subcommittee states the best way to prevent an us versus them mentality is to quote reject religiously charged terminology and problematic positioning by using plain mean American English. End quote.

The department members are asked to use the term quote-unquote American Muslim rather than quote-unquote Muslim American. And quote-unquote Muslim communities rather than quote-unquote Muslim world.

[3:53] to encourage feelings of inclusivity. In addition, DHS is recommending the terms like jihad, which translates to holy war, and sharia law, which refers to Islamic law, should be abandoned in favor of less religiously charged language.

Interesting. Now whether you agree with that or not, this tells us something. Words have meanings. And people use words to convey meaning.

To communicate something to somebody or somebody's plural. I've had somebody say this to me before. You know, words are just meaningless.

You know, it's like, what do you mean? You just said something that meant something to say that something is meaningless. That makes no sense. They didn't know what to say to that. Because it was meaningless. Ha! Get it? Words. Putting words together forms conversation. [5:01] Sentences. What about our conversations? What about our conversations with each other as Christians? Maybe we should do what the DHS is doing.

Maybe we should ban certain words. From now on, I'm calling the Bible. If you go there, you shouldn't say this word, this word, that word. I don't know. Maybe we should do that. Is that the solution?

Maybe not necessarily ban words, but stop saying some things and start saying other things.

Or like what? How? How? How do you do that? I read this article by David Powelson. And if you leave this morning, you'll see a stack of them in the back.

You can take that with you. I'm just basically getting my message from this. Because I read it, and I went, wow. This is very helpful to me. Wow. This is probably helpful to us as a church.

[6:02] So, this is where it comes from. This is not my stuff. I just kind of added some things for you. Let me start with a question, if I could.

When it comes to conversations between men and women, what may be a typical generalization? Men don't talk honestly with each other. Women don't talk constructively with each other.

Now, before you get offended. Oh! Did he really say that? This is not always the case. Okay?

I get that. But it's true enough. Us guys. It's easy for our conversations to be superficial.

Or self-concealing. We never get to anything that really matters. We'll talk about work. Food. Projects.

[6:59] How about that football game? What about these Golden State Warriors? Empty words. Now, I understand many women do the same thing, too.

I get that. Men. Men. Are our conversations pointless? Superficial?

Empty? For you women, it's easy for conversations to be reviewingly honest with lots and lots and lots of words.

And guys just say, yeah. No. That's easy. But, you know, it's easy for conversations to be. We're really honest, and yet totally unhelpful.

You may say what you think and feel, only to be unprofitable to the person who's listening to what you think and feel. Unfruitful words.

[8:02] Versus men, empty words. For you ladies, unfruitful words. At night. There's times when men do unfruitful words, and there's times when women do empty words. I get that. But there's nothing good.

Ladies, do your words rehearse wrong, but not pursue making things right? James tells us what we shouldn't do with our words, but we end up doing it anyways.

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. With it, we both, we curse and bless each other. We do the thing we shouldn't do.

And what should we do? And what should we do, said James? Control that darn thing. But how?

How can we begin to change the way we talk to each other?

Which is the title of this message. Changing the way we talk to each other. Changing the way we talk to each other. How do we do that? How do we change the things that we say to each other?

[9:13] How do we change from empty words to more something words? From unfruitful words to constructive words.

How can we have words that are constructive, grace-filled, encouraging, loving words? How can we do that? I'll give you a few things. This is not exhaustive.

I understand that. But we'll help you through this. And really understand, I'm just doing this for me. But there's two important points for you to remember.

First, number one, God is listening to every word I say. If you're taking notes, you can specifically say, I say. Matthew 12, 36.

And I'll go different places. If you want to go there, you can go there. Feel free. If not, you can listen. Matthew 12, 36. Tough.

[10:10] One of those tough verses. You go, wait a second. It doesn't really mean that, right? And I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. Ooh. Ow.

Taff. Ooh. So he listens to every word, even the most casual, unthinking, explicitive, blank, blank, blank, word that you just said this morning when you were coming here to church. There was, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. How you doing, pastor? I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. Am I kidding? God notes and ways are words.

God is listening to every word I say. So, are our conversations empty, misleading, inappropriate, critical, judgmental?

So we're asking ourselves a question. We're going to talk about how we deal with that. But I'm bringing these points up for you to remember. Okay, God's listening to what I'm saying.

[11:14] What are empty words? Surface conversations that never get real. Guys, this is for us.

What's harmful? This is for guys and for you ladies. What is it? Dig up dirt? You presume and assume things. So there's two important points we need to remember before we even begin to start talking about changing the way the things we say to each other.

Okay? First, God is listening to every word I say. Second, Jesus never said a pointless word to others. What an example.

He always, always, always engage the important matters. He never just pointed out what's wrong. And walk away. He never just did that. He pointed out what was wrong, but he wouldn't just complain about it.

[12:27] He would do something about it with his words. His conversations always went somewhere helpful, speaking, life-giving words.

Grace-giving words. He was candid. Yes, he was.

But constructive. Relevant, yet gracious. Piercing, yet kind.

He was. He was. And everything that he said was redemptive. You ever say something, you go, ooh. Did that come out of my mouth?

Was that out loud? God? I know none of you have ever done that. I have. Just go ask my wife. How do we know the quality of our words and conversations?

[13:34] Jesus told us there in the same chapter, Matthew chapter 12 and verse 34, you prove the vipers, how can you be an evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

As the song goes, see what's in my heart will soon come out and positivity is flowing out of me. At least it should be. Out of the mouth, the heart is speaking.

Whether it's going to be evil or good. What's happening in my heart? Is there an idol of my heart and then what did I come out with a judgmental criticism or harshness, lack of grace, whatever.

There's something happening here and it's coming out here. I mean, when you say something, when you speak a word and you're like, why did that come out?

Where did that come from? Say, where did it come from? What's in my heart, O God? Jesus tells us how to know the quality of our words and conversations in our heart.

[14:58] Okay, so, how do we deal with this? So, I'll give you, which is from David Powelson, three principles on how to change the way, I don't like how it says how.

That was dumb, Jim. Three principles on how to change the way we talk to each other. I'm going to give you three. There may be more, but David Powelson and I were good buddies, so we're giving you three.

Number one, God wants us to have meaningful conversations with Him and teaches us how to do that. He does? Where?

Psalms? Other prayers? Passages in Scripture? Or do you just say, where? The Bible. Now, I gave you specifics like the Psalms.

Look at other prayers. Prayers of Paul and Peter. Prayers of Solomon. Of Daniel. It shows us how to be candid and yet constructive.

[16:06] Timely and yet piercing. Gentle and loving. In these passages, in Scripture, we remember who God is.

We learn to talk honestly to God about what is good and bad about us. We learn to speak to God of hard things, but also happy things in our situations. We learn how to cry out to God where we need help.

And then we learn to sing with thankfulness. Those are all the things that we learn from the Scriptures. How do we have a conversation with God? He speaks to me from His Word and then I talk to Him.

The Bible teaches you how to do that. It teaches us how to do that. Okay? For example, take the Psalms. The psalmist cries out to God, remembers who He is, and then praise and thanks comes from His lips.

So the theme, like for instance in the Psalms, is crying out to God, oh yeah, God is dot dot dot dot dot dot, thanks and praise. That's the theme in the Psalms. I mean, maybe not every single Psalm is like that, but the general theme in Psalms is that you read the Psalms and he's crying out to God, he's just overwhelmed with so much pain and affliction and then he's, oh yeah, God is like this and like this and like this, praise and thanks.

[17 : 28] That's the theme of Psalms. There's an example. How do we talk to God? How do we converse with Him? God wants us to have meaningful conversations with Him and teach us how to do that in His Word.

this is an important point. We really need, we need to really listen to how Scripture shows us what it's like to talk with God.

Christian. If you call yourself a Christian, which means follower of Jesus, a disciple of Jesus, if you're not in the Word, if you're not reading God's Word habitually on a daily basis, even every other day, and yet you're trying to figure out why these words are coming out of your mouth, yeah, there's a problem.

You need to engulf yourself in the Scriptures. You need to engulf yourself in God's Word. Read, study, meditate, meditate, long for it.

We need to really listen to how Scripture shows us what it's like to talk to God so that leads to principle number two. God then teaches us how to have meaningful conversations with each other because the way we talk to Him directly relates to how we talk to each other.

[18 : 59] in other words, you read the Scripture, this is how you're supposed to converse and talk with God. Uh-huh. And this is how you're supposed to converse and talk with each other.

The Scripture gives us the paradigm of how we're supposed to speak to each other. That's what it does. Or to put it in a long way, God teaches us to have meaningful conversations with each other because the way we talk to Him directly relates to how we talk to each other.

Oh yeah, I put the verses there which we're going to go to. We're going to read Ephesians 4.15, 29 and 30, Colossians 3. We're going to read those in just a second. The way we talk to Him directly relates to how we talk to each other.

How can you say you love God and yet hate your brother? Says 1 John 4. Right? So how my relationship with God is in direct proportion to my relationship with other people.

So the way I have conversation with God is in direct relation to how I have conversation with others. Let's read these verses. Ephesians 4. Again, you can turn there, you can listen.

[20 : 16] Ephesians 4.15, whoops. But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, Christ. So we grow up in Christ by lovingly speaking truth with each other.

29 to 30 kind of unpacks it a little bit. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need that it may give grace to those who hear.

And the very next verse says, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. The very next verse after he gets to saying, let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth is don't grieve the Holy Spirit, i.e.

in other words, there are words that you can speak to each other and when you speak certain words to each other, that can grieve the Spirit of God. Because they're not constructive, they're not filled with grace, they're not, they're just piercing and candid, but not grace filled.

also Colossians 3, 3.8 Paul says, but now you also put them all aside, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech from your mouth.

[21 : 39] Do not lie to one another since you laid aside the old self with its practices and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him.

At least he's talking about words here. Abusive speech don't lie to each other because you're different, you're changed. God has done a transformation in your life by his grace.

So the words, because he's changed your heart, the words should be different now. We grew up in Christ speaking the truth to each other with love.

So now let me kind of, you have this second principle, let me kind of give you some sub points to this, unpack it a little bit more for you in this second point. First, we speak about the difficulties we have with each other.

We communicate those things. Not yelling or screaming. A psychologist will tell you you should yell and scream at God. The problem with that is that's nowhere in the scriptures.

[22:43] When create idea, the Bible has a better one. Now, we don't get our anger off our chest with God. There's no venting at God, which means there's no venting on each other.

You see? You see what's happening here? Psychologists, they tell you, you should vent at God. So therefore, what should you do? You should vent at other people. That's very helpful.

I guess the guy in Orlando thought that was a good idea too, didn't he? Oh, there's true hurt. Yeah. There's complaint.

There's dismay. There's pain. We communicate those things with God, but we communicate it with an attitude of faith and trust. Ah. So we speak our hurt to each other with an attitude of trust in God. We speak our hurt to each other, the difficulties that we have with each other, trusting God. So as there's a trust in God, there's not one of those. There's calmness.

[23:53] There's grace. And yet there's, I'm hurt by what you just said to me. Again, still in the second principle, the way we talk to God directly relates to how we talk to each other.

We're flushing this out, putting flesh on these bones. So first, we speak about the difficulties.

Second, that's a big one, I know. With others, we remember who God is.

With others, we remember who God is toward us and display that same thing toward others. Grace, love, compassion, gentleness.

This is where the gospel comes in, friends. God has shown us grace in Jesus Christ, and this is where in our words we give grace. And see, this is where the gospel in your life makes a huge, huge, significant difference.

Because you can change this all you want, but remember, it starts here. And if you're here, you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, you may merely just change this, but you cannot change this.

[25:08] You must turn from your sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ. He died for sinners on behalf of those explicative words that you said to that person or persons yesterday and the day before that.

He died to save sinners from that. If you repent and put your trust in Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose on behalf of sinners, God exhausted His wrath upon Jesus Christ instead of sinners so that you can be saved if you turn and trust in Jesus Christ.

He will change you. He will transform you by His grace. So this is where the gospel comes in.

Because as I am, as I see how God's been so gracious to me in the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the thing that's going to drive what's coming out of my mouth.

At least in theory, it should. God is we remember who God is and display the same thing toward others.

Grace, love, compassion, gentleness. There's no venting here. There's no just screaming, and I just got to get this stuff off my chest.

[26:25] Really? That's not biblical. Where do we get that from? It's a man-made concoction.

No. We see how much God has been so gracious to us in Jesus Christ. And we display that same grace to each other. You display, husbands, that same grace to your wife.

wives, you display that same grace toward your husbands. You display that same grace to your kids. Siblings, you display that same grace to your brother or sister.

You display that same grace to your relative or to your neighbor across the street who's just a jerk. And you would feel good to just punch them in the mouth right?

You know that. I'm not the only one who feels that way. And yet, has not God been so gracious to you? And then third, again, still in this second principle, but third aspect to this, we give words of encouragement, thanks, reconciliation, etc.

[27:47] That's what comes out. nourishing, constructive, candid, yet kind, piercing, yet gentle, wise, giving, grace-bestowing, grace-filled, and gospel-encouraging.

Are my words, gospel-encouraging words, are my words, and I put this my on purpose, not just for you as you're writing notes, but for me, Jim, are my words nourishing, constructive, timely, gentle, wise, giving, grace-bestowing, grace-filled, and gospel-encouraging?

You know, and this is, again, where the gospel comes in, because, you know, you're going to say things, you're going to be like, ooh, I shouldn't have said that.

And that's when you come to the person and say, will you forgive me? And they forgive you based upon the cross. Praise His name that Jesus died for that sin that you, that, that just came out of your mouth.

That, that, that just came out of your mouth. Praise His name, we get forgiveness from that. So, I'm giving you two principles, right?

[29 : 13] We learn to listen to scripture. Muy importante. Very important. Then we talk about the same kinds of things with other people. But there's a third principle.

And it's here that's just as important, too. We rely on the Holy Spirit to generate wise conversations. you cannot do this in your own power.

No way. It's a good thing God puts His Spirit in us. Praise His name for that. We rely on the Spirit to generate wise conversations.

Galatians. These verses for you, which I'll read. Galatians, I was in Colossians, you can go, if you're reading with me, go a few pages back in your Bible to Galatians 5, 16 to 18.

Galatians 5, 16. But I say, work by the Spirit. You will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Flesh means the remnants of sin that still resides in us as Christians.

[30 : 22] Not flesh, not this body. The body is not sinful. If it is, then Jesus was sinful because He was human. It's not about you being human. It's remnants of sin.

That's what flesh means. For the flesh sets its desire, verse 17, against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to one another, so you may not do the things that you please.

But, if you're led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. We're dropping down to verse 25. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. Notice the things that are opposite to being led and walking by the Spirit.

The opposite is that you're boastful, you're challenging, you're envying. Notice, two, more or less, definitely one out of that three is involving words. So, Scripture demonstrates how our conversations should be like God and how they can go somewhere good with others.

[31 : 31] And here, the Holy Spirit, as we rely upon His enabling power, gives us grace to be obedient to the Word and to speak words of life and grace.

That's what He does. That's not some mystical thing that He, I'm going to put my lightning rod up there and then something's going to shoot down and words are going to come.

That's not how it works. Notice what I said here. His enabling power gives us grace to be obedient to the Word. Relying on the Spirit means you're being obedient to the Word.

And so that the words that come out are words of life, grace, nourishing, constructive, candid yet kind, piercing yet gentle, wise giving, grace bestowing, grace filled, gospel encouraging, words.

And sometimes what must be said next is nothing.

[32 : 39] Maybe it's good for you to not say anything. You don't always have to say something. You don't always have to fill the time or the air with words.

It's okay to say nothing. It's okay to have silence. Maybe you're grieving. Or maybe you're thinking or pondering on something.

Maybe you're praying. Maybe being silent shows more how much you care than giving your blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Remember, it's about true, constructive, appropriate, grace giving words. And see, the world's going to be opposite to that, isn't it?

That's pop psychology today, man. The world is filled with untrue, destructive, inappropriate, grace killing words.

[33 : 49] I mean, they're harsh, man. They're just relentless. Nasty, harsh, hurtful, derogatory, attacking words.

Are you struggling with your words? I thought about beginning the message by talking about the fires in California.

And you see how James in our passage that we read a few moments ago, he likens the tongue to fire. What do you talk about?

How do you talk? Once again, the principles for you. Listen to how scripture shows us what it's like to talk to God. Listen to scripture.

scripture. You read, yeah. But really listen to scripture. Two, you talk about those same kinds of things with other people.

[35:00] You go to scripture to find the principles how you're talking with God and how you're talking with God. And scripture shows you how you talk with God. You talk with other people that way.

And then three, you must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. You cannot do this on your own, Christian.

There is just no stinking way. You can't do this on your own. You must rely upon the power of the Spirit to work in you. I'm going to pray.

And I normally, we do a time of silence where you are able to think and ponder. So we're going to do that, but I'm also going to pray. And then pray, I want to encourage you, you don't have to do this.

I want to encourage you, pray for yourself. Pray that God would work in you with these principles to work in us as a church that we would be a people that are filled with grace in our words.

[36:14] So take a few moments and do that. And I'll pray kind of in between that, you take time to think and ponder and pray. And I'll pray and then we'll have some more silence and then we'll continue on our time of giving and singing two more songs in our closing prayer.

But do that. Silence. Think. Ponder from what we've seen here in God's Word. Amen.
aches through the Father's Word.