

Paul gives us the standard by which to measure our speech. It is to be helpful and beneficial. Using abusive language brings sorrow to God's Holy Spirit (v 30).

When we receive the love of God it should fill our hearts to overflowing. And the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. What news do we have to spread that is better than any gossip?

15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. - Mark 16:15 NLT

Rather than tearing down people with our words we have the power to build them up. You can do this with words of affirmation spoken over them in "I see in you" prayers. Take time to pray with those in your group, encouraging them with words that affirm God's gifts and graces that you see in them. (e.g. John, I see in you a faithful servant ready and willing to be used by God to bless others.)

WRAP-UP

Our words are very powerful, and they can do great good or great harm. We must bridle our tongue to prevent it from being used to spread evil through slander and gossip. Resist the lie that gossip gives you power, or makes you appear better than others. Find better ways to connect with others than tearing someone down. Seek to be a bearer of good news, representing Jesus to those around you. And let your words be chosen to be helpful, beneficial, and uplifting so that you will honor God in all you do and say.

MEMORY VERSE

13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored. 14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. - Ephesians 3:13-15 NLT

Challenge-

Be aware of your conversations this week. Whatever you say about someone, check to see that it is helpful and beneficial. Quick check- If you wouldn't want them to overhear you say it, don't say it to others.

Rumor Has It Hunger for Holiness Week 5

INTRODUCTION

It is hard to overestimate the power of our words. On the contrary, we tend to forget their potential for doing damage until it is too late. The Bible gives us ample guidance in how to use our words for good rather than evil. From the first page of Genesis, God demonstrates the power of words to create and bring life. But it wasn't long before Satan corrupted the power of words and used them to deceive, create doubt, and usher in sin and destruction. When we gossip, we give the enemy weapons to use against us.

Ice Breaker

Do you recall the words of a particularly powerful speech that had a significant impact on your life? Maybe from a teacher, a pastor or historic figure.

Key Passage

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. - Ephesians 4:29 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Words Can Bring Life or Destruction

3 Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ... 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. - Genesis 1:3, 26-27 NLT

If you doubt the power of words, pause for a moment to consider how God chose to create. He didn't merely think things into existence, nor did he cobble them together from other material. He didn't wave His hand nor snap His fingers. It was the power of His spoken word that created something out of nothing.

In Genesis ch 1 verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25 what does God observe about each thing He created? How is verse 31 different from those verses?

35 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. 36 And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. 37 The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."

- Matthew 12:35-37 NLT

17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

- Colossians 3:17 NLT

What does Matthew ch 12 tell us is determines whether our words produce good or evil things? How does Colossians 3:17 help guide us in keeping the motives of our hearts good?

We all need to do a heart check. Those things we choose to pursue, dwell on, and give first place in our lives will shape the motives of our heart.

Think back over the course of last week. Was there something you spent time on that caused your heart to grow bitter, or jealous, or angry? What can you do to let that go and replace it with God's love?

19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

- James 1:19 NLT

It is impossible to "unhear" hurtful words (or unsee written ones). If we let our emotions dictate our speech, we may be doing harm that cannot be undone.

Can you think of a moment that if you could go back and control your words, you would radically reshape the trajectory of a relationship? Have you told that person that you are sorry for what was said?

If we follow James' advice, we will greatly curtail the damage that we can inflict through careless or angry speech, including gossiping about them to others. We must care more about our brother than we do about being right.

2. Gossip and Slander

8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. - Colossians 3:8 NLT

In Colossians chapter 3 Paul gives us a list of behaviors that characterized the lives of non-believers. But the life of a believer should look different from the world around us. Amongst the behavior we are to get rid of is slander, which in Greek is Blasphamia. Slander is speech that's injurious to another's good name. In our current culture that is not limited to the spoken word but can be written or digital. Even if what you say is true, it is Blasphamia if it is spoken with the intention of harming someone's reputation.

What is gossip likened to in Proverbs 26? Where do rumors and gossip impact us (v. 21)? What kind of damage have you seen resulting from slander or gossip?

20 Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops. 21 A quarrelsome person starts fights as easily as hot embers light charcoal or fire lights wood. 22 Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one's heart. - Proverbs 26:20-22 NLT

So, gossip involves speaking negatively about someone who is not present. We probably recognize it in others more quickly than we see it in ourselves.

As you think about those who slander others, let's consider why they do it. What do they have to gain by ruining someone else's good name? What are some of the justifications given for spreading gossip?

3. Helpful and Beneficial Words

29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. 30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. - Ephesians 4:29-30 NLT