

Faith Speaks

Lesson for Sunday, November 26, 2023

MEMORY VERSE FOR JAMES 3 IS VERSE 10

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Idea: How important are our words? Can you share an illustration where words made a difference?
- ⇒ Idea: Gather some of the greatest quotes in history and see if the class knows who said them.
- ⇒ Point: Our words are powerful! They can hurt and they can heal.
- ⇒ It seems reasonable, that in a book as practical as James, that he would have something to say about our speech.

BIBLE STUDY: *Let's begin with a broader study of what the Bible teaches about words.*

1. God Speaks (*quick point*)
 - a. Throughout the Bible, we read the very words spoken by Almighty God.
 - b. First, we need to recognize the power of words.
 - i. Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6-9; Hebrews 11:3
 - ii. God creates through the power of His words.
 - c. Second, God has used words to reveal Himself to us.
 - i. See Genesis 1:27-28; 2:16-17 as examples.
 - ii. God gave Adam and Eve their purpose for existing. He gave His commands through His words.
 - d. Third, God highly values His words.
 - i. Psalm 138:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - ii. God's written Word contains God's spoken words.
2. Satan Speaks (*quick point*)
 - a. See Genesis 3:1, 4-5.
 - b. In the account of the Fall, we learn that Satan speaks. His words contradict, distort and twist God's words.
 - c. This is important to remember because it reminds us that words can be used for both good and evil.
3. People Speak (*the main point*)
 - a. In James 3:1-12, James drives home some inconvenient truths and reminders. He will tell us that the tongue is untamable, capable of great damage, and our words are an indication of the true condition of our hearts. There are five points we need to notice:
 - b. First, we must recognize the great responsibility of teaching God's Word (vs. 1).
 - i. This verse is specifically aimed at those tasked with the responsibility of teaching God's Word in the context of the local church. For those with this challenge, great care and great prayer are required.
 - ii. But in another real sense, all Christians are teachers. Some are parents, friends, leaders in business, etc.
 - iii. Notice James's warning: With great responsibility comes stricter judgment (vs. 2). Also see Matthew 12:36-37.
 - iv. The lesson here is that our words have eternal significance. Pay attention to your words!
 - c. Second, we must recognize the great potential of sinning in what we say (vs. 2).
 - i. We are all sinners – especially in our speech! See Romans 3:13-14.
 - ii. Brainstorm as a class the many ways we sin in our speech: gossip, cursing, slander, criticizing, complaining, lying, etc.
 - iii. James is saying that the mature believers have learned to bridle their tongues.

- iv. Discuss: How do we do that? 1 Timothy 4:7 – we must exercise ourselves! It will take deliberate work and discipline!
- d. Third, we must recognize the great power of the tongue (vs. 3-6).
 - i. James presents his readers with three practical illustrations. Work through each:
 - ii. The horse: control the mouth and you control the rest of its body.
 - iii. The ship: a giant ship is directed by a small rudder.
 - iv. The spark: a small spark can lead to huge consequences.
 - v. What is true in each of these illustrations is true for our words.
- e. Fourth, we must recognize our inability to tame the tongue (vs. 7-10).
 - i. Why? Because our problems are deeper than our mouths!
 - ii. This leads us right into the final point...
- f. Fifth, our words are an indication of our hearts (vs. 11-12).
 - i. Take some time to look these verses up and read them slowly for your class. Let the wrestle with what God's Word is saying in each:
 - 1. Jeremiah 13:23
 - 2. Mark 10:25-27
 - ii. James is driving home his point: Sinful words inevitably come from a sinful heart.
 - 1. Mark 7:14-23 or
 - 2. Luke 6:43-49

ILLUSTRATION:

- ⇒ Imagine a man who has an apple tree in his backyard that only produces rotten apples.
- ⇒ He really wants it to produce delicious, red apples, but all he gets is rotten fruit.
- ⇒ He tells you that he has a plan to fix the tree. The next day you see him come home with a bag of shiny, red apples.
- ⇒ He gets out his ladder and his nail gun, and he begins to staple the good apples to the tree.
- ⇒ The tree is alive a healthy now, right? Wrong.
- ⇒ The fruit may look good from a distance, but there is still a problem with the root.
- ⇒ So it is with us: Our hearts, not just our behavior or our speech, are bad apart from Christ.
- ⇒ Much of what we read and hear about in terms of people changing and growing spiritually is nothing more than fruit stapling.
- ⇒ Jesus tells us (& James) that our tongue problems are heart problems. We don't need a spiritual tongue doctor but a spiritual cardiologist.
- ⇒ What do your words reveal about your heart?