

## Words Matter!

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Rich Nathan

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Powerful Words Series

James 3.1-12

From the time we were little, many Americans are taught that what comes out of our mouths is really no big deal. In the US there is a nursery rhyme that says

*Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me!*

I don't know if those of you who were raised outside of the US have a nursery rhyme like that. I don't know who came up with it, but I would like to throw some sticks and stones their way! Just a moment's reflection would tell us that it is infinitely easier to recover from a broken wrist or a broken leg than it is to recover from a broken heart, or a wounded spirit that came about through hurtful words.

Even as adults we tend to discount the importance of words. "She's just a big talker." "Yes, he's a great speech maker, but that's it." Now, if we mean that life is more than words, I totally agree. But if we mean that words are nothing, that words don't matter, that words aren't hugely important, I totally disagree. Consider the power of just a few words to change our lives forever.

*Will you marry me?*

A simple four-word question that if you answer either yes or no, will change your destiny for the next 50 years or more. Or the simple 2 word answer to the question: "Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

*I do.*

Or in the hospital,

*It's a girl!*

Or in court,

*Not guilty!*

Or at work,

*You're fired!*

Or in a doctor's office,

*It's cancer*

Or you receive a phone call,

*Mom died*

Words have power. Words matter. In history I think of the power of Abe Lincoln's 2-minute, 227 word Gettysburg Address which shaped our national sense of identity.

*Conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

Or how about

*Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

Words have power. Consider Dr. King's speech at the Lincoln Memorial 52 years ago.

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!*

My favorite one word message was General McAuliffe's response during WWII to the German demand that the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division which at the time was surrounded in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans demanded immediate surrender. And when presented with this demand for surrender, General McAuliffe wired back a one-word response:

*Nuts!*

The 101<sup>st</sup> held out and McAuliffe's refusal to surrender became one of the turning points in the Allied victory in WWII.

Today I'm going to start a brief new series that I've titled "Powerful Words." For the next few weeks we are going to consider the incredible significance of what comes out of our mouths. I've called my message today "Words Matter!" Let's pray.

James 3:1–12 (NIV)

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we

praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Of all people on our planet, Christians should most of all respect the power of words. Of all people, Christians should believe that what comes out of our mouths matter; that words matter.

### Words are important

The Bible tells us right at the beginning of Genesis that God created the world by way of words. Ten times in Genesis 1 we read the phrase,

And God said...

Over and over again, it's And God said, And God said, And God said. God created the world by way of words. And over and over again in the Old Testament prophetic books we read the phrase, "The word of the Lord came" to so and so. The word of the Lord came to Micah. The word of the Lord came to Jonah. The word of the Lord came to Zephaniah

Words are important because words are the way that relationship happens. Words are the currency of relationship. When God wants to initiate a relationship with us, he speaks to us. In fact, Jesus is called the "Word." He's called the "Word of God." Jesus, according to the Gospel of John, is "the Expression of God." If you want to know what God is like, not just a few of his ideas, or a few of his commands, or a few of his promises, but if you want to know God, then the very expression of God is Jesus, who the Apostle John calls "the Word of God."

Words matter because words are the way that relationship happens. Apart from people expressing themselves, we have no ability to relate to them. If God did not express himself in Jesus, if he did not let us in on the divine secret of who he is, he would remain a mystery to us. And if we don't speak to one another, we remain a mystery to each other.

Words matter. Do you realize that the first sin right after the fall of men and women, right after Adam and Eve sinned against God by disobeying his command regarding eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, do you realize that the first sin was a sin of speech? Adam turned to God and in the classic statement of blame-shifting, he said,

*The woman you put here with me gave me the fruit and I ate it.*

God, I am not responsible for my choices. I made the choice because of the wife you gave me. I sinned against you, Lord, because of my husband...because of my mother...because of my father...because of my boyfriend...or whatever. It is the school system's fault. The first sin after the fall was a sin of speech.

When the Apostle Paul wanted to prove the point that every human being is a rebel, and that every person on earth has turned their backs on God, when Paul wants to prove that no one actually is a God-seeker, that we all in our hearts have a tendency to run away from God, when

the Apostle Paul in the greatest letter ever written in human history wants to indict the whole human race, he confronts us with two sins. One is the sin of violence. And the other is the sin of speech.

Romans 3:10–18 (NIV)

10 As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

11 there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one.”

13 “Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”

14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

16 ruin and misery mark their ways,

17 and the way of peace they do not know.”

18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Words matter. In the Old Testament, when the prophet Isaiah was in the Jewish Temple, he had a glorious vision of God. Here is Isaiah in the Temple worshipping God. Suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the angels worshipping God, crying out, “Holy, holy, holy...” In the presence of God and in the presence of his holy angels, what sin was Isaiah immediately conscious of? What came to his mind in terms of his own impurity and uncleanness? It was his sins of speech. The part of the body that Isaiah immediately became self-conscious about was his mouth – not his hands, or his feet, or his sex organs. In the presence of the holiness of God, the part of his anatomy that he became most self-conscious about was his mouth.

Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)

5 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

As he listened to the heavenly choir, Isaiah realized that he couldn’t join in the praise of God because of the impurity of his own mouth.

Everywhere the Bible speaks to us about the importance of our words to create and destroy, to build people up and to tear people down.

James continues in this tradition of underlining the significance of our words by writing in James 3.1,

James 3:1 (NIV)

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

The stock in trade of a teacher is words. Any one of you who are teachers, you understand that teachers deal in words. Here, James is talking about teachers in the church, but I think it could be extended to anyone who is a teacher. James speaks about the strict judgment that teachers are subject to due to the influence of their words.

Words are influential

Words are influential

On the church

It would be hard to overstate, or overestimate the influence of the ministry of teaching on the history of the Christian church. The church's survival, the church's spiritual depth depends on teachers. Being a teacher of God's Word is ranked along apostles, prophets, and evangelists in Paul's list in Ephesians 4.11-12.

Ephesians 4:11–12 (NIV)

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Teachers are ranked with prophets in Acts 13 as leaders in the church in Antioch.

In the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church a list was formulated regarding what these two great branches of the church have called "Doctors of the Church." The Doctor of the Church (and there are only 36 of them in the history of the Roman Catholic Church), to be called a Doctor of the Church, a man or a woman had to significantly contribute to the teaching ministry of the church. So, folks like St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and John Chrysostom and Teresa of Avila are all considered Doctors of the Church because their teaching was influential.

It is not enough for a person to make a Christian commitment, to simply begin the Christian life. An individual needs to be built up in their Christian faith after they've made a commitment. Just parenthetically, a church our size needs hundreds of people to help deepen and develop the faith of our large church. People need to be instructed in how to live out their Christian faith.

If you are a person who says, "Rich, I would like to help some other people deepen their Christian faith," we would like to talk to you following the service at whatever campus you're at. Go out to the lobby and tell the pastor there, or go out to the small group counter here at Cooper Road, and ask the pastor there, "How can I find out more about becoming a small group leader?" We need hundreds of folks to help deepen and develop the faith of others here at Vineyard Columbus.

Teaching is so influential. Most of the problems that we read about in the Early Church in the New Testament were the results of bad teaching. In Galatia the church there was falsely taught that

they needed to obey all of the Jewish ceremonial laws in order to be saved; that trusting in Christ and Christ alone was not enough. In the city of Colossae the Colossian believers were taught that Jesus was not enough; that in addition, they needed to engage in various ascetic practices; that they needed to be let in on secret wisdom to be saved. In Corinth, young believers there were taught that what you did with your body sexually didn't matter; that sex was just like eating. It was a physical act and not a whole person act that involves your body, your heart and your soul.

Teachers are so influential. Think about the impact of bad teaching on the church today. Just the simple bad teaching that God wants every Christian to be wealthy. Think about how many million Christians have plunged themselves into financial ruin believing that God would never let them face bankruptcy. How many million Christians have had their faith shattered because they were taught that God wanted every one of his children to be wealthy and they weren't wealthy?

Or the false teaching that God endorses all of our desires; that that's what it means to be a Christian. You are signing up to have the rocket-booster of God's power attached to your agenda for life. Friend, being a Christian is not God endorsing our agenda for our lives, our agenda for romance, our agenda for children, and our agenda for career success. Becoming a Christian means you sign up for God's agenda. And God's agenda gets worked out for the rest of your life. For the rest of your life you are wrestling with how does God's agenda impact the way that I engage in the workplace, the way that I engage in the arts, my choice of career, the way that I think about romance, the way that I think about retirement, my choice of major in college. Christians are people who sign up for God's agenda.

Because of the influence of teachers, James teaches that greater influence brings with it greater scrutiny and greater accountability.

James 3:1 (NIV)

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Friends, whatever influence we've been given, whatever position of leadership, God will hold us accountable for how we exercise that influence. If God gives you the great responsibility of being a parent, then God will hold you responsible for the way that you act as a father or a mother. You may be separated, you may be divorced, but you are still held accountable for the responsibility of being a father, or being a mother. You helped to conceive a child; you are responsible to care for that child. If God has allowed you to succeed in business so that you have a lot of employees, then God will hold you accountable for the way your employees are treated. Greater responsibility leads to greater accountability.

Words have influence in the church. But words also have an extraordinary influence on our individual spiritual lives.

On our spiritual lives

James 3:2 (NIV)

2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

The word translated “perfect” in v. 2 doesn’t mean sinless or flawless, someone who never makes a mistake, someone who never exercises bad judgment. The translators are translating the Greek word “teleios” which means mature, reaching its intended goal.

Teleios = Mature, reaching its intended goal

Now, James 3.2 is not for everyone here.

James 3:2 (NIV)

2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

Some of you listening to me today have not yet made a commitment to follow Christ, or to say “yes” to his agenda for your life. You haven’t done that yet. Others of you are not sure whether you are a Christ-follower or not. You’re not sure if you have ever signed up for Christ’s agenda for your life. James 3.2 doesn’t really apply to any of you who have not yet said “yes” to Christ and yes to his agenda for your life.

But for those of you who have said yes to Christ and yes to his agenda for your life, the Bible teaches us that the ultimate goal of the Christian life is that God forms in the deepest part of our personality – a reflection of his own goodness and glory. He wants our habits, our attitudes, our motives, our inner thought processes, our actions, our words to look like the thoughts and habits and attitudes and desires and words and actions of his Son, Jesus. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is that you and I be perfect reflections of Jesus. That we relate the way he would to disappointments and slights and being overlooked. God wants us to ultimately love the way Christ loves and God loves people.

Now, we struggle a great deal with this issue of becoming like Jesus. We have lots of worship songs about “Lord, make me holy.” We sing, “I want to be holy.” Or “Purify my heart, make me as gold and precious silver.”

So we pray, at least I hope we pray, Lord, make me like you. I don’t want to continue to be dogged by this particular sin. Purify me and make me right.

And some of you know that one of the secrets to becoming like Jesus is the practice of certain spiritual disciplines. Taking time to talk to God and to listen to him in prayer, taking time to dig into God’s Word and making the Bible a part of your life and a part of your thinking so that you would start thinking Christianly. And reading Christian books by writers like C.S. Lewis or Richard Foster. Taking time to meet with other Christians in a small group, to study scripture together, to be open about our lives, to pray together.

Well, James says that there is a missing key in most people’s pursuit of becoming like Jesus. That there is something that goes beyond prayer or Bible study or fellowship. James says there is a neglected key to Christian maturity – to focus on our speech. Words matter!

James says in v. 2,

James 3:2 (NIV)

2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

Literally, we all trip up! There is no one who reflects Jesus Christ perfectly. We all mess up in lots of ways.

You say, “I keep stumbling over this one area of my life, even though I have prayed about it and asked God for holiness. I pray in the morning and I read my Bible. I have even fasted, but I don’t seem to be making progress in the area of my jealousy or my pride, my envy, my anxiety, or people pleasing, my greed or my lust.”

James says there is a neglected key to holiness, the control of your tongue.

How’s that?

James 3:3–4 (NIV)

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

Well, James uses two illustrations of gaining control over something powerful through something small and seemingly irrelevant. He uses the illustration of a bit in the mouth of a horse that can make the horse obey. We just take a little bit of iron and put it in the mouth of a 2000 lb. animal and with a drop of pressure pulling on the reins, we can make the horse turn and obey. We can make him stop. Here is a horse that can pull a huge plow and yet we can cause it to stop with just a little jerk on the reins because of a small piece of iron. Or here is a ship that can carry thousands of tons of cargo and hundreds of passengers. We can turn the ship and direct it spinning a wheel because of a rudder.

James is illustrating for us how we can bring powerful forces in our own personalities, all these drives and inner conflicting feelings that pull us one way or another. James is saying, “You want to know how to bring all of this under control so that it will obey you?” You are focusing on the wrong thing. For a little while don’t focus on your anxiety, or on your envy, or your temper. Instead, focus your attention on your speech. If you can control your speech, pull that under control, then you will keep everything else under control.

Why is focusing upon what we say the key to controlling everything else in our lives? Why is our speech so influential on our spiritual growth as Christians?

To get control over what we say requires deep self-reflection concerning what comes out of our mouths. If I want to stop exaggerating, I must ask myself the question, “Why do I tend to exaggerate? Why do I make things seem better than they are, more wonderful than they are?” If I dig there for a while, I realize that underneath my exaggeration is an idol of what people think about me. I want to appear better than I am in the eyes of others. Friends, our speech is a key to discovering our deeply rooted idols – what we most want out of life, what we really worship.



Why do we lie? Why do we cover up? If we did there for a while, we'll find that the reason why we lie is because what another thinks about us is more important to us than what God thinks of us. Fundamentally, we are people pleasers and that drives so much of our behavior. James says, if you could get a hold of your mouth, you will get a hold of your whole person, body and soul because you will begin to dig out some of the deep roots of what drives your behavior.

Like every great teacher, James pounds his message home. He wants us to understand that our words matter. He does it by screwing this message into our heads turn by turn, illustration by illustration. Words are important. Words are influential.

Words are inflammatory

James 3:5–6 (NIV)

5 ...Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

To illustrate the power of words, James uses the illustration of a little spark lighting a great fire.

A few years ago I read a story in the New York Times during the horrible California fires. Law enforcement officials discovered that a 10-year old boy started one of the largest fires in Southern California while playing with matches. What was called the Buckweed Fire started in the early afternoon of October 21<sup>st</sup> in a rural community in the northern part of LA County. It was fanned by high winds and hot dry weather and spread quickly. It drove 15,000 people from their homes and destroyed dozens of homes and other buildings. It burned 38,000 acres. Here is a picture.

Picture of the Buckweed Fire

This fire was started by a 10-year old boy playing with matches.

James says the tongue is a fire.

And all over the church, if we want to maintain relationship with each other, there are these little fires breaking out – fires of negativity toward someone in the church – gossip against a leader or a pastor; cynicism toward a direction the church is taking; criticism against someone in a small group. There are fires breaking out all over the church, fires of negativity. And there are fires breaking out regarding what God wants to do – fires of vision, fires of fresh direction, fires of encouragement. So if you could see spiritually everywhere in the church, you would see fires breaking out – fires of negativity and fires regarding what God wants to do within the Vineyard.

A Christian leader named John Maxwell, has written a really helpful picture concerning what followers of Christ ought to do in dealing with the fires breaking out all around us. He says every Christian is given two buckets – a bucket of water in one hand and a bucket of gasoline in the other. And it is the responsibility of the Christian to know which bucket to dump on which fire when we encounter them.

So, you come on a fire of negativity, someone who is being critical, someone who is gossiping, someone who is being cynical, and someone who is slandering someone else. You take your

bucket of water and you could dowse that right away and say, “I don’t want to hear that. That’s not true. What you are saying is wrong.” Or “If you have a problem, you need to go and talk with the person you are criticizing.” You have a bucket of water when you see that fire of negativity, you can just snuff it out.

Or, you can use the wrong bucket in that case, the bucket of gas, and when there is negativity, gossip or slander, you can pour your gas on and say, “WOW, let me spread this fire around. I will be the keeper of the flame. I will be like one of those marathoners that light the torch and start other fires of negativity around. Let me spread this gossip and slander throughout my small group, or my family, or my circle of friends, or in my office. Or someone writes a harsh email to you, or criticizes you or says something that offends you, remember Proverbs 15.1:

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Likewise, if God is doing something, if the leaders in the church are calling for fresh direction, fresh vision, someone in one of your groups has a fresh initiative, there is a ministry being birthed and God is lighting a fire, a fire of renewal in some place in this church, you can come along with your bucket of gasoline and pour it on that fire of what God is doing and spread what the Lord is doing to others through the fuel of encouragement, through the fuel of speaking faith. Or you can take your bucket of water, the bucket of cynicism, unbelief, the bucket of “I don’t think this is going to work,” the bucket of suspicion and you can dowse whatever little fire God has started.

You know, so much of what gets established in a church, whether God’s blessing remains in a church or the church is overcome by negativity and criticism, so much depends on your understanding that you really are carrying two buckets – bucket of water and a bucket of gasoline and when you use which makes all the difference.

But James is not done. He will not release us until we say yes, words matter. What we say matters. What comes out of our mouths matters. Words are important, James says. Words are influential. Words are inflammatory. And in v. 6,

James 3:6 (NIV)

6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

James is saying words are infiltrated.

Words are infiltrated

During the Spanish Civil War in the 1930’s, a general on one side of the war told a journalist that as his four columns approached Madrid from the north, south, east and west. A fifth column of supporters inside the city would undermine the government there and support the invasion. A fifth column has come to mean anything within a group that undermines the group’s unity. The attack doesn’t just come from outside, it comes from within. And James is saying that the fight we face in life is not just coming from outside, that we’re attacked from outside, but that there is

a fifth column in each of our hearts that's opening the city gates, making ourselves available to the powers of darkness.

James says that our words can become an instrument of hell.

James 3:6 (NIV)

6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

Our words can be infiltrated by Satan. Here is a horrible thought, that you and I through our speech can be used by Satan to destroy God's agenda in someone's life or in our little part of the world. That our words could release a little bit of hell in our marriages. That our words could release a little bit of hell in our homes. That we could release the power of hell in a child's life and destroy a child's spirit. That you and I could release a little bit of hell in the church; that even good people, nice people, even pleasant people like us could be instruments of Satan and have their speech flowing from hell.

Jesus saw that in his friend, Peter, when Peter was being used to tempt Jesus to not go to the cross. Peter said, "Jesus, no. This will never happen to you. You must not be crucified." Jesus saw that behind Peter's words stood the devil himself. He said in Matthew 16, "Get behind me Satan. You are a stumbling block to me." You are being used to throw something in my way that comes from hell.

How could my words bring a little piece of hell into the world? When we try to tempt someone else to sin, we're inviting the power of darkness into our little corner of the world. Men and women, when you try to push your girlfriend, or boyfriend into having sex outside of marriage, you try to talk them into it, reason with them about why this makes sense, you are being used as an instrument of Satan and you are bringing a little bit of hell into the world. When we try to get an employee to lie, our boss pushes us to lie to a client, when we push our spouse to lie, or to bend the truth on a form, to lie to the government – when someone's words are designed to tempt us to sin, they are being used by the devil. When we slander someone, when we slash someone's reputation, when we make them less in the eyes of other people, we are being used by the devil. When we lie, when we deceive, we're being infiltrated by hell because Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies.

In vv. 7-8, James calls the tongue incorrigible. And finally, James speaks to us about the hypocrisy that is revealed by our inconsistent words.

Words are inconsistent

James 3:9–12 (NIV)

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

James' logic is really tight. He says when you worship God in church, the one you are praising is no less than our Lord and Father. And when you curse someone, you are cursing someone made in the likeness of our Lord and Father. And so it is so inconsistent; it is so hypocritical to on the one hand speak praise to God, and on the other hand curse his image.

I used this illustration a few weeks ago, but James is saying something like this. Let's say you were invited to the White House for a private meeting with the President. You sit down in the Oval Office, just you and the President alone. You have a nice chat and you praise the President to his face. And then you walk out from the White House and on the street there is a poster of the President. You take out a can of spray paint and over the President's image you write the word "jerk."

That's what we do when we slander someone else, when we curse someone else. It is like we see a painting of Jesus Christ and we paint over his face the word, "Jerk!" Those of us who love Jesus can't imagine doing that. But it is so inconsistent, so hypocritical to claim to love Jesus and then curse his image in another human being.

We say, "I always speak my mind no matter who gets hurt." James says, "You need to discipline your speech."

We say, "I know I gossip too much, but I can't help it." James says, "You need to control your tongue."

"Oh, I know I'm sarcastic. I know I put other people down." James says, "You need to change your speech habits."

"I know I exaggerate; I know I lie." James says, "You need to change; you need to repent."

Friends, we are on our own, in our own strength can't control our speech. James says this in vv. 7-8:

James 3:7-8 (NIV)

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

The tongue is incorrigible. It is like a child with severe oppositional defiance disorder. Our speech is like a 600 pound gorilla that is sitting on your living room couch. On our own we can't get him to move over. What we can't do in our own strength, God can do, if we invite him to live in us and work through us to change us. There is one single word that can change us forever. It is the word "yes." Yes is a powerful word. Yes is a word of decision. Yes is a word of commitment. Yes is a word of acknowledgement. Yes is a word of agreement. When you say yes, you move a relationship forward in incredible ways.

Today, I want to give many of you an opportunity to say yes to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Friend, if you've never completely said "yes" to Christ, yes to totally surrendering your life to Christ, yes to his agenda for your life, in a moment I'm going to ask you to stand. And when you stand, we're simply going to say, "Yes to you, Jesus."

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**Words Matter!**

**Rich Nathan**

**June 13-14, 2015**

**Powerful Words Series**

**James 3.1-12**

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