

m MASTERCLASS | JAMES

DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 12

READ

JAMES 3:3-8

FOCUS

³WHEN WE PUT BITS INTO THE MOUTHS OF HORSES TO MAKE THEM OBEY US, WE CAN TURN THE WHOLE ANIMAL. ⁴OR 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. ⁵LIKEWISE, 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. ⁶THE 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. ⁷ALL KINDS OF ANIMALS, BIRDS, REPTILES AND SEA CREATURES ARE BEING TAMED AND HAVE BEEN TAMED BY MANKIND, ⁸BUT NO HUMAN BEING CAN TAME THE TONGUE. IT IS A RESTLESS EVIL, FULL OF DEADLY POISON.

REFLECTION from PASTOR AUTUMN IGO

Have you ever had a toddler come over to your house? If you know you have a little one coming to visit, invariably you will find yourself running around your home “toddler proofing.” Putting away delicate things, padding sharp corners, and in general making things safe for all involved. One area of special concern is the kitchen...especially the stove. All those buttons and knobs can prove irresistible to tiny exploring hands. The thing is, I have never once in my life spent a single moment telling a toddler how wonderful and useful my stove is. I’ve never explained the details of how to turn on the flames or how to control the temperature. All of my energy was directed in telling them what they really needed to know...that it’s dangerous. I warn them...HOT! Be careful! Don’t touch! It’s not that the stove and its fire can’t be beneficial (or I wouldn’t have it), it’s just that the most important thing for toddlers to know about it is that it is dangerous!

This is exactly what James is saying in this passage. He uses a couple of examples and paints some vivid word pictures, but the heart of his teaching here is that our tongues—the words and thoughts we express with our mouths—are dangerous. He goes even further and tells us that not only are they dangerous...they are inherently evil. Yes, words are helpful, useful, and necessary...but what James wants us to remember above all is just how perilous they are. Words seem so small...we use thousands of them in a day (some of us more than others, as my husband likes to remind me)...but these tiny things direct our whole lives. Think about it. Our words are the way we represent ourselves to the world...be it verbal, written, recorded, professional, or personal. They steer our lives. And at their root...our words are wild, uncontrolled, and evil. They can destroy our lives more quickly than we could even imagine. No wonder James thinks he needs to warn us about them.

In spite of all this, God is going to use our words to bring revival in this generation. Our words have the power to bring light into this dark world. But we need to remember that their power can be used to destroy even more easily than to build.

There are fires ravaging up and down our state, burning, destroying, and filling our skies with smoke. You didn’t have to be in the presence of the flames to see the effect of the fires, all you had to do was open your eyes. The skies were red and everything we looked at was tinged orange (and often covered in ash). What a great reminder of the power of one misplaced spark, one little flame that got out of control. As James says, we can’t control our mouths on our own...no human can...but God can. He can take our powerful, dangerous words and turn them into mighty tools for revival in our land. So go out, be bold, tell the world that Jesus really does change everything...but also, be careful, choose your words wisely, watch your mouth...it can get you into big trouble.

QUESTIONS

- HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE POWER OF WORDS MADE EVIDENT IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS?
- DO YOU TREAT YOUR WORDS AS DANGEROUS? HAVE YOU BEEN CAREFUL WITH YOUR WORDS LATELY?
- SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING. THINK THROUGH THE DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE YOU WILL COME IN CONTACT WITH IN THE NEXT 24 HOURS AND ASK GOD TO GIVE YOU WORDS THAT WILL BUILD RATHER THAN DESTROY TODAY.