JUST WORDS?

NOVEMBER 11, 2026 / JAMES 3 + EPHESIANS 4

NAME _____

TODAY'S MESSAGE

SMALL WORDS CAN CAUSE BIG DAMAGE.

James 3:3–5

A small bit guides a horse. A small rudder steers a ship. A tiny spark can start a great fire. Our words can have a much bigger impact than we realize.

YOU CANNOT HONOR GOD WHILE DISHONORING PEOPLE MADE IN HIS IMAGE.

James 3:7–10

James warns against praising God with the same mouth we use to tear down people made in His likeness. Every person deserves dignity.

DON'T JUST STOP TEARING DOWN. START BUILDING UP.

Ephesians 4:29

God calls us to speak words that are helpful and encouraging. Following Jesus changes the way we treat others with our words.

BEFORE YOU SPEAK OR HIT SEND

1. Is the person in danger?
2. Is it true?
3. Is it mine to share?
4. Will sharing it help this person or situation?

JUST WORDS?

NAME _____

THE QUESTION

Are your words helping people experience the love of Jesus—or making it harder?

THE TRUTH

Words reveal what is happening in our hearts. Jesus calls us to stop spreading harm and intentionally speak truth, kindness, and encouragement.

MEMORY VERSE / EPHESIANS 4:29

Read Ephesians 4:29 in your Bible. Underline what Paul tells us to stop doing and circle what he tells us to do instead.

4 DAYS. WORDS THAT GIVE LIFE.

DAY 01	**WHAT'S IN MY HEART?**	Luke 6:43–45
DAY 02	**THE RIPPLE EFFECT**	Proverbs 16:27–28; 18:6–8
DAY 03	**CHOOSE A BETTER CONVERSATION**	Matthew 18:15–17; James 1:19
DAY 04	**SPEAK LIFE**	Colossians 3:8–17; Ephesians 4:29

WHAT'S IN MY HEART?

READ Luke 6:43–45

READ IT

Jesus describes a tree by the fruit it produces. In the same way, the things we say reveal what is growing inside us. Our words are not random; they often expose our attitudes, fears, and desires.

THINK ABOUT IT

It is easy to focus on avoiding certain words. But Jesus invites us to look deeper. When you make a joke at someone else's expense, are you trying to fit in? When you repeat a story, do you want attention? Jesus can change more than what you say—He can change what your heart wants.

YOUR TURN

According to Jesus, what does fruit tell you about a tree? What do our words reveal about us?

GO DEEPER

When do your words change depending on who is listening? What feelings tend to come before an unkind comment?

MAKE A MOVE

Pause before you speak, text, or post today. Ask yourself, "Why do I want to say this?" Write down one attitude you want Jesus to change in your heart.

PRAY IT Jesus, search my heart. Grow kindness and humility in me so my words reflect You.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

READ Proverbs 16:27–28; 18:6–8

READ IT

Proverbs warns that destructive speech can ignite conflict, divide close friends, and draw people into harmful conversations. A story can spread far beyond the person who first said it.

THINK ABOUT IT

Gossip often feels small in the moment: one joke, one screenshot, one “Did you hear?” But the person being talked about is more than a story. Their reputation, trust, and friendships matter. You may not have started the drama, but you can choose not to help it spread.

YOUR TURN

What consequences of harmful speech do these Proverbs describe? Why do rumors feel tempting to repeat?

GO DEEPER

Think about the last time someone was discussed while absent. Did your response protect their dignity or make the story spread?

MAKE A MOVE

Do not pass along one story that is not yours to share. If someone is unsafe or being bullied, tell a trusted adult rather than staying silent.

PRAY IT God, help me see the people behind the stories. Give me wisdom to stop harm instead of spreading it.

CHOOSE A BETTER CONVERSATION

READ Matthew 18:15–17; James 1:19

READ IT

Jesus teaches His followers to address wrongdoing directly and carefully. James reminds us to listen quickly, speak slowly, and resist quick anger. Both passages point away from careless reactions.

THINK ABOUT IT

Talking about someone can feel easier than talking with them. But sharing frustration with everyone except the person involved rarely brings peace. A respectful conversation can clarify what happened. For serious situations, involve a trusted adult; you do not need to confront someone alone when it is unsafe.

YOUR TURN

What steps does Jesus describe when someone sins against another? How might James 1:19 change the way you begin a hard conversation?

GO DEEPER

Is there a conflict you keep discussing with others? What are you hoping to gain from those conversations?

MAKE A MOVE

When someone hurts or frustrates you, Jesus calls you to go to them directly (Matthew 18:15) rather than gossip about them. What is one specific step you can take to choose restoration over gossip the next time conflict happens?

PRAY IT Jesus, make me quick to listen and slow to speak. Give me courage to pursue peace wisely.

SPEAK LIFE

READ Colossians 3:8–17; Ephesians 4:29

READ IT

Paul tells believers to put away anger, slander, and harmful speech and to put on compassion, kindness, humility, and love. Ephesians adds a positive purpose for our words: building others up.

THINK ABOUT IT

Following Jesus is not only about refusing to gossip. It is about becoming the kind of person who brings encouragement into a room. You can tell the truth without being cruel, refuse a rumor without embarrassing someone, and notice people who rarely hear something good about themselves.

YOUR TURN

Which old speech habits does Paul tell us to put away? Which new attitudes does he tell us to put on?

GO DEEPER

Who around you needs encouragement? What would it look like to speak truth with grace instead of using truth to hurt?

MAKE A MOVE

Give one specific, sincere encouragement today. If your words have hurt someone, consider a genuine apology and a change in behavior.

PRAY IT Holy Spirit, shape my words to bring truth, kindness, and hope to the people around me.

DON’T JUST READ IT. LIVE IT.

MEMORY VERSE / EPHESIANS 4:29

“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.”

THE QUESTION STILL STANDS

Are you becoming someone who spreads drama—or someone whose words reflect Jesus and help others grow?

LOOK BACK AT THE FOUR DAYS

MY HEART	**What motivation behind my words needs to change?**
THE RIPPLE	**What story or rumor do I need to stop repeating?**
MY CONVERSATIONS	**Where do I need to listen, apologize, or ask for help?**
SPEAK LIFE	**Who can I intentionally encourage this week?**

MY NEXT SEVEN DAYS

One specific habit I will practice: