

Strong and Kind

(James 3)

Introduction

Ask: Have you ever heard someone say the following: “*Why did you do that? You are so stupid!*” Maybe you’ve said it to one of your siblings? How about: “*Don’t tell me what to do! You aren’t my boss.*” People can say some very hurtful things, can’t they?

Our words are very powerful! They have the power to either draw people to God or to push them away from Him. We need to learn to stop and think about our words before we speak them.

We have been learning lessons from the book of James. In our first lesson, James taught us that if we want to become strong in our faith, we must become **wise**. In our second lesson, James taught us the importance of being **faithful**. Now James is going to teach us that to grow strong in our faith we must learn to **always speak kindly**.

In our lesson today, we will learn that our tongues are powerful weapons. We need to use our words wisely for telling the truth and lifting people up. Our words can either build up or break down our relationships with others.

Opening Prayer

Father, help us understand the power of our words and how we should represent You through the words we speak. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Memory Verse

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)

Lesson

Shuffled Words

[Teacher, before class cut out a sheet of letters for each team (see last page of this lesson), shuffle each stack, and place them in a plastic baggy. Divide the students into groups of 2 or 3 and give each team a baggie of cut out letters. Explain to the class that they will answer a series of questions by *silently* finding the right letters with their partner, spelling the answer then holding the letters up for you to check. Keep score for each team, 1 point for the team that gets the right answer first.]

Before we get started, we’re going to play a little game called “*Shuffled Words*” that will teach us to work together and carefully choose your words. I will ask you some questions and you will answer them by silently spelling the answer with the letters I have given you.

You must remain silent during the game. This will help you learn to think before you speak. Remember no talking! If you talk, I will take a point away. Ready?

1. What was the name of the garden where Adam and Eve lived? (Eden)
2. Who built the ark? (Noah)
3. Who was swallowed by a whale? (Jonah)
4. Who killed Goliath? (David)
5. What kind of animal threatened Daniel’s life? (lion)
6. Who was Jesus’ mother? (Mary)
7. Which sea was divided so Moses and the Hebrew people could run from Pharaoh? (Red)
8. Who is the enemy of God? (Satan)

Taking time to think before you speak, even when you think you know an answer, is important if you want to become strong and mature believers.

James tells us that our words affect our actions.

James 3:2

Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

Ask: What do you think this verse is telling us?

James is telling us that if we control our speech, we will be able to control our behavior.

Ask: Say your brother or sister came into your room and took your favorite toy (or book or game), and you cried out, “*Hey, I’m going to beat you up if you ever take my things again.*” What response would your sibling have? Would she say unkind back words to you? Would she cry or try to hit you? Would a big fight start?

Ask: What is a better way to react to this situation? What kind words could you use instead?

God wants us to build each other up, not tear each other down. We must take the time to choose kind words if we want to become strong believers.

James 3:7-8

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, (8) but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

[Teacher, take a tube of toothpaste and squeeze some out on a paper plate.

Ask: Can you get the toothpaste back in the tube?

No! that is impossible, isn’t it? The same is true of our words. Once we speak something, we can’t just take it back. We must think before we speak, asking ourselves and God if what we are about to say is truthful, encouraging, and uplifting.

James goes on to talk about the tongue:

James 3:9-12

Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. (10) And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! (11) Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? (12) Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can’t draw fresh water from a salty spring.

Ask: What would you think if you went to get a drink of water from the kitchen faucet and it was salty sea water? Or if you saw bananas growing on an apple tree? It just wouldn’t be right, would it?

James is telling us that kind words and unkind words should not be coming from the same person’s mouth. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then every thought, word, and action that you do should show others that He is your Lord and Savior. We can’t be acting like we love and worship God, and then turn around and badmouth our friend.

Strong believers make a point of encouraging other people with kind and helpful words. They aren’t insulting or rude or hurtful.

Ask: How would you describe a person who speaks kind words. What kind of character does a thoughtful person have? [Teacher, list the student’s descriptions on the board; such as, *patient, encouraging, wise, forgiving*, etc.]

Now let’s see how James describes a person who uses kind words:

James 3:17-18

*But the wisdom from above is first of all **pure**. It is also **peace loving, gentle** at all times, and **willing to yield** to others. It is **full of mercy** and the fruit of good deeds. It **shows no favoritism** and is always **sincere**. (18) And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.*

When we focus on showing these qualities, then it will be easier to speak kind words. However, you must make an effort to push

selfishness and pride from your hearts if you want to honor God through your speech.

Pray that the Lord would help you use words for lifting others up instead of bringing them down. Using kind words doesn't come naturally to us; it is something that we all need to practice. Thankfully, we have the Holy Spirit to teach us how to think before we speak. He wants us to encourage and lift up others.

So, to become a strong and mature Christ-follower, we will learn to use kind words.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, give us the desire to use our words to lift others up instead of bringing them down. We know that as we learn to do this, we will become strong believers and we'll lead others to You instead of pushing them away. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Marbles

Preparation: Create a 24" dartboard for a floor game with three circles. Note: it works best if you use fabric like felt so the marbles don't roll so fast. Make the bullseye an 8" circle and the secondary circle 16". Label the bullseye, "10 points", the middle circle "20 points", the outer circle "50 points", and label the area off the dartboard as "100 points."

Place some marbles in the center of the dartboard on the bullseye. Use another marble as the "shooter."

Play: After correctly answering a review question, the player uses his thumb to flick the "shooter" from the edge of the dartboard into the bullseye to scatter the marbles placed there.

After each turn, add up the points based on where the marbles have rolled. Then gather the marbles and return them to the bullseye for the next person to scatter.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. How can our words affect our actions? (They can either pull people towards God or push them away from Him.)
2. What does it mean in verse 2 where it says, "if we could control our tongues, we could also control ourselves in every other way"? (If we control our speech, we will be able to control our behavior.)
3. How can you learn to tame your tongue? (Ask the Holy Spirit to help you think before you speak and to choose uplifting words.)
4. Explain today's verse, "*You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry*" in your own words.
5. Why is it not right that "*blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth*" (vs 9)? (If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, then every thought, word, and action that you do should show others that He is your Lord and Savior.)
6. What kind of character does a thoughtful person have? (A thoughtful person shows that he or she is *patient, encouraging, wise, forgiving*, etc. These are the fruit of the Spirit.)
7. Who helps us think before we speak and helps us choose kind word? (Holy Spirit. You must have placed your faith in Jesus.)
8. What are the three ways we become strong in our faith that we have learned from James so far? (Becoming wise, being faithful, and using kind speech.)

Letters for the "Shuffled Words" activity

E	D	E
N	O	A
H	J	D
V	I	L
M	R	Y
S	A	T

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