

Daily Devotional: Things That Matter

Theme: “Words That Matter”

Scripture: James 3:5-10

"In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire... It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

— James 3:5-8 (NLT)

We have a lot of conversations every day. Experts say the average person has about **30 conversations daily**—and if you're a woman, science suggests you might be saying *a few thousand more words* than the men around you. (Sorry, guys, it's just how we're wired.) Sometimes it feels like we're down to our final few words of the day and all we can manage is: **“Leave me alone.”**

But in all seriousness, words matter. How we live, how we love, and *how we speak* are all connected. James 3 reminds us how powerful our tongues are. It's such a small part of our body, yet it has the power to *build someone up or tear them down*. Like fire, it can warm or destroy. Like poison, it can heal or harm.

I remember a funny story about a quiet farmer. Someone asked him, “Does it aggravate you when your wife always gets the last word?” He thought for a second and said, “Nope. I'm just glad she finally gets there.”

Humorous, yes—but there's truth buried in that. Sometimes we're in such a rush to *get there first*, to win the argument, to have the final say, that we forget the weight of what we're saying. Maybe it's frustration. Maybe it's pain. Maybe we're just tired and our filter fell off an hour ago. But sometimes, even if we meant it... *we shouldn't have said it*.

I'll be honest—this hits home for me. There are moments when I reply too quickly to a message or comment, and my words come off cold, sharp, or flat-out misunderstood. It's not that my heart was wrong, but my **tone and timing** were. When that happens, it doesn't reflect God—it reflects my *mood*.

The Bible reminds us: *“Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”* (Matthew 12:34). So if we want our words to sound like Jesus, our heart has to be rooted in Him.

That means slowing down, pausing before we speak, and letting the Holy Spirit lead our conversations.

We all spew garbage from time to time. We're human. Maybe it's stress, poor health, pain, or just a rough day—but we must be careful not to let those things dictate our speech. Instead, let's strive to speak from a heart that's been sitting with Jesus.

Even as parents sometimes we say stuff to our children and our words come off harsh because we don't know exactly what they are going through and our tone may come off sounding harsh and hurtful when we really don't mean for our words to hurt our children.

So today, let's pause.

Let's ask: *Are my words building up or tearing down?*

Am I speaking from my flesh or from a heart shaped by God?

Your tongue is powerful. Use it to speak *life, kindness, patience, and truth in love*. And when you slip up (because we all do), be quick to make it right. That, too, reflects the heart of God.

Prayer:

Lord, help me be mindful of my words. Let my heart be so filled with You that my mouth reflects Your goodness. Give me wisdom to speak with grace, love, and truth. And when I get it wrong, give me humility to make it right. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflection Question:

When was the last time you spoke too quickly or said something you regretted? What could you have done differently to reflect God's heart in that moment?

Verse to Meditate:

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt..."

— Colossians 4:6

Discussion Questions:

- **Think about a recent conversation—did your words build someone up or tear them down?**
What would you do differently if you could go back?
- **James compares the tongue to a small spark that can set a whole forest on fire.**
Can you recall a time when your words had a bigger impact than you expected—for better or worse?
- **Have you ever had your tone or timing misunderstood, even if your intentions were good?**
How do you handle situations when someone takes your words the wrong way?
- **What are some signs in your own life that it's time to pause before you speak?**
(Stress, fatigue, frustration, etc.)
- **How can you be more intentional about reflecting God's heart in your daily conversations—both spoken and written (texts, emails, posts)?**
- **When someone says something that hurts you, how do you respond?**
What would it look like to respond with grace instead of reacting out of emotion?
- **How can you invite the Holy Spirit into your conversations this week?**
Are there certain situations or people where you especially need His help?