

You Are What You Eat: What You Say

Good Morning, today we are continuing on from last week at looking at rebuilding lives and we are in the 'fit out' stage of the construction metaphor. Last week Phill began looking at the dining room as a metaphor of the things that we consume into the core of our being and that have an impact on us.¹ These things have an impact on how we think, how we act at work and home, how we treat others and how we live out our lives every day.

You may say, "I am allowed to do anything." But I reply, "Not everything is good for you." And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12 NLT)

Last week Phill looked at this text when he talked about what we see and today I am using a slightly different translation but what this text is saying is that whilst you can do anything, not everything is good for you and some of the things you see, you say and you listen to, you can also become slave to them or in other words addicted to them.

Today I am going to look at what we say. We have today in our culture and society what we call 'freedom of speech,' which means that generally you can say what you like. This means that you have freedom to express yourself in what you say regardless of what anyone thinks.

However what people say are not just mere words that are spoken, but those mere words can have an impact on your thinking/perspective, how we act, other people and that impact can be both positive and negative depending on what is said.

I am sure that you have heard the familiar rhyme 'sticks and stones will break bones, but words will never hurt you.' A poet called Steve Turner came up with his own version of that rhyme which was 'stick and stones will break your bones and words will tear your heart out!' Words have more power than people like to admit.

Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose.
(Proverbs 18:21 -The Message)

What you say can give life, empower, inspire, bring hope, bring healing, encourage, help, support, be kind or be instructive. But words can also bring death and damage people, they can be criticising, nagging, unkind, vicious, they can be filled with anger and hate, violent, aggressive and abusive, they can disempower and discourage and cause people to despair.

There are countless stories of people who were raised in homes and schools where they were told that they were never good enough, they were useless and would never achieve and end up in Sainsbury's or pregnant by the age of sixteen and some of those have struggled against all the odds and all that they were told to achieve and others have ended up just like what was said to them.

¹ From the first page first and second paragraph of last week's message you are what you eat sight.

There are also many stories of children who were raised in family's where they were encouraged, believed in and supported who achieved much more and didn't have to struggle through the negative words that been spoken to them as a child.

So now you can begin to that what you say are not mere words and the reality we become addicted or a slave to our words by becoming people who either predominantly say things that hurt people and have a negative affect or alternatively we become people whose words can bring life, hope, healing, instruction, encouragement, empowerment and support. I am sure that we all know or have known people in your own lives whose words bring life and people whose words are destructive and bring death.

Reflect: I want you to take a few minutes and think about some of the things you have said this week. Were they positive, negative, a mixture of both? Was there are consequences to what you said this week? Has anyone spoken any words to you this week that affected you in some way?

I want to look quiet detailed at James 3:2-12 and James tells us about the words that we say. James is speaking to scattered Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire and from verse two James tells us that when it comes to what we say we all make mistakes. 'We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you'd have a perfect person, in perfect control of life.' (James 3:2 The - Message)

How true! Amen! when it comes to what we say we all make mistake, we all say things we regret and we all say things we don't always mean, we all say things that afterwards we poke and prod ourselves and ask ourselves why did you say those things, why didn't you just keep your mouth shut!' or something similar!

When it comes to what we say the truth is that most of time we simply respond to what is said to us without really thinking first and what is difficult is that it shard to control what we say because it just comes out. James uses six metaphors or images in this scripture to describe the tongue and I want to explore what these metaphors tell us about what we say.

WHAT YOU SAY - CONTROLS THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE

A BIT - The first metaphor/image that is used is the bit.

'A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse.' (James 3:3 Message) The bit is a relatively small piece of metal that is placed inside of a horse's mouth allowing the horse to be directed right or left or telling him to stop. The tongue is like a bit because it is a small part of our bodies that steer our lives in different directions depending on what is said.



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THE RUDDER - The next

images that James uses is a

rudder. 'A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds.' (James 3:4 Message) A rudder controls the direction of any boat from a



large liner, aircraft carrier to a small yacht. A rudder is used in aeroplanes also to steer their direction.

These metaphors show you the powerful influence of what you say on your own life and to the lives of other people you speak to everyday. It's the idea that what you say controls the direction of your life and sometimes the lives other peoples takes. If you are person who speaks predominantly positive things and is positive about things there life will move in more positive direction. If it's someone always complaining, moaning and finding something that wrongs them that person's life will be more negative. Nothing is ever right!

The rudder metaphor says that the rudder in the hands of skilled captain can carry on course in the midst of the strongest gales. What you say either helps you face the storm or it can make you run from the storm and life is full of people who can face and embrace problems when they come and others who run away when things get tough. (it's the father who runs and leaves his family when the money is not enough and he can't pay the bills – instead of staying with it and working out with creditors a plan to pay them back – they run and leave there wives and children to face it alone)

This also affects how we relate to other and you see in schools:

My Boss at Singlegate is very positive, very solution orientated, no matter how bad a child acts she is always finds something positive about them and over time they become a lot more positive and confident about themselves. Whereas other teacher and parents focus on what Jack can't do, how he's never good and plays up and poor jack ends up getting upset, running out the classroom shouts 'I'm useless' slams his chair down and starts kicking Mary. The sad reality is that it happens in the workplace tooooo!!

(START A CHINEESE WHISPER - to demonstrate the point)

WHAT YOU SAY SPREADS – DESTROYS OR ACCOMPLISHES.



THE FIRE – A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it! It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.

(James 3:5-6 – The Message)

The next image James uses to describe what we say is fire. What you say can be like fire and just like a small spark can ignite an entire forest, a few words can cause a lot of pain. James tells us that what you say can either cause to accomplish or destroys anything and as this text says all it takes it

one spark or just one word. When we past round a Chinese whisper you can how what was spoken by (Maureen - whoever) changed as different people encountered it and passed it on.

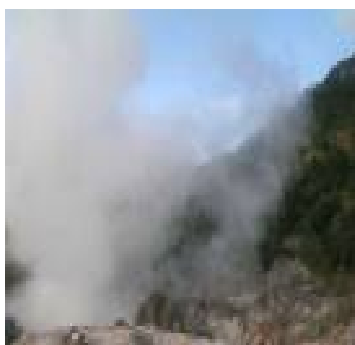
Another example of this would be gossip, all it takes is one person gossiping about their supervisor and they the gossip is passed on from one person the next like a growing fire and every time someone else adds their own little bit to the gossip until it turns into a raging fire that hurts someone or some people. The message translation is so right because what we say can turn harmony into chaos, it can ruin a reputation and it can cause distress. And I am sure that we have all experienced gossip and it's affects.

But what we say whether positive or negative is easily spread and what is said has consequences, if it's positive them it will accomplish, if it's negative them it will destroy and harm and those who hear it and come into contact with what you said.

WHAT YOU SAY – DANGER! BEWARE!!! IS HARD TO CONTROL

A DANGEROUS ANIMAL

The fourth metaphor/image James use is a dangerous animal. 'This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. (James 3:8) You can't tame your tongue. What these verses is saying that you can't follow a nine step program to become positive, happy person that never has to worry about what you say ever again. It's continuously working and thinking about what you say because controlling the tongue is life-long process and just when we think we've sorted out what we say, we speak and say something and realise we not in control and to think about what we say.



A SPRING – With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth! My friends, this can't go on. A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and brackish the next, does it? (James 3:9-10-The Message) In the spring metaphor you discover that cannot tame your tongue and you can speak positive words and negative words, you can bless someone and curse someone and you can be kind and unkind. James tells us that this cannot go on and this shouldn't be the case that we are cursing and blessing or being positive and negative or where our words both accomplish and bring death.

What would what you say to be?

WHAT YOU SAY – WHATS IN YOU WILL COME OUT

FRUIT - The final image is that of fruit in verse 12: "My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt



spring produce fresh water.” We expect a fig tree to have figs on it and a grapevine to have grapes. Nature reproduces after its kind.’ (James 3:12NLT) The final metaphor/image James give us concerning what we say is the image of a fruit tree. Fruit trees produce fruit after their own kind. In other words you will not get pears on an apple tree; you’ll never get strawberries on a cherry tree. It’s the same with what you say because what you say is a reflection of what is in our hearts. You can try and hide it but who you are on the inside will show when itself when you speak.

A good tree produces only good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. You can tell what a tree is like by the fruit it produces. You are a bunch of evil snakes, so how can you say anything good? Your words show what is in your hearts. Good people bring good things out of their hearts, but evil people bring evil things out of their hearts. (Matthew 12:33-35 NLT)

Reflect: I want you to take a few minutes and think again about some of the things you have said this week. Were they positive, negative, a mixture of both? Was there are consequences to what you said this week? Has anyone spoken any words to you this week that affected you in some way?

TOUGH WORDS

We all have to sometimes have tough words with people especially if you have children, however tough words don’t have to be hurtful you words don’t have to imitate, disrespect and disempower. You can speak tough words without those tough words being destructive.

Some questions to ask yourself when it comes to what you say:

- **Is it True?**
Ephesians 4:25: ‘So put away all falsehood and “tell your neighbor the truth” because we belong to each other.’(NLT)
- **Is it Helpful? Will your words help bring about a solution to a problem?**
Proverbs 25:15: Patience and gentle talk can convince a ruler and overcome any problem. (CEV)
- **Is it Inspiring? Will your words build up someone?**
Ephesians 4:28b: Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (NLT)
- **Is it Necessary? Do we have to say anything at all?**
Proverbs 10:19: Don’t talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow! (NLT)
- **Is it Kind? Are your words based on a desire to help?**
Proverbs 15:4 ⁴Kind words heal and help; cutting words wound and maim. (Message)
- **Or will it hurt that person?**
Proverbs 15:4 ⁴Kind words heal and help; cutting words wound and maim. (Message)