

RAD

WEEK 3 (HYBRID)

BIG IDEA

James 3:1-12; Mark 7:1-8; Luke 6:27-28

Bible

James 3:1-12; Mark 7:1-8; Luke 6:27-28

WHAT?

POLL | What About You?

- We've all been in situations where we've exchanged insults with someone, right? Whether it's in fun or in anger, sometimes we use words like weapons, like when we gossip, start rumors, criticize, mock, tease, or insult.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Have students reply to the following questions by raising their hands.*
- So what about you?
 - **Have you gotten angry because of someone's words recently?**
 - **Have you been hurt or embarrassed by someone's words recently?**
 - **Have you said anything to anger, hurt, or embarrass someone else recently?**
- We've all been hurt by others' words, and we've all used our words like weapons. So today, we're going to talk about our words.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **Summarize the plot of your favorite movie in only three words.**
 - * **Are you the kind of person who says whatever you think or do you hold back? Does it depend on who you're with? Give an example!**
 - **Have you ever said something you regretted because you didn't think before you spoke? What happened?**

SO WHAT?

STORY | Talk about how someone's words hurt you.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when someone's words hurt you. Share what they said, how it made you feel, and how it impacted your life, perspective, or beliefs about yourself. Don't be afraid to get vulnerable by sharing something personal, but make sure you're not sharing a fresh wound publicly.*
- It's probably not difficult for you to remember some of the hurtful things that have been said to you. Whether it was a family member, friend, bully, or person on the internet, hurtful words stay with us.
- Words have a lot of power. So what do we do when someone's words hurt us deeply? And what do we do when we really want to use our words like weapons?

THAT'S RAD

- Like we mentioned last week, there were a lot of people who thought Jesus was too "radical."
 - In the 90s, "rad" meant "cool." But its real meaning has to do with being different, revolutionary, and counter-cultural.
 - What Jesus said about loving God and others was radical, and what He teaches us about our words is pretty radical too.

SCRIPTURE | James 3:1-12

- Throughout this series, we're looking to the Bible for practical advice on how to change the world with God's radical love, and that search has led us to the book of James.
 - This "book" is a letter written by a guy named James, Jesus' brother.
 - I don't know if James and Jesus ever got into fights when they were kids, but I would be pretty terrified to go verbally toe-to-toe with Jesus, and not just because He's God. When you read the stories of Jesus in the New Testament, it's clear that Jesus was pretty clever. Whenever someone tried to fight, trick, or debate with Him, Jesus always had a comeback that made people stop and think.
 - James was around Jesus his entire life, so he probably lost a few debates to Him. Because he knew Jesus so well, the letter he wrote is packed with summaries of Jesus' teachings, retold in James' own words.
- James is known for its straightforward instructions for how to follow Jesus. These teachings might seem simple, but they have the power to create radical change. Let's see what radical things James has to say about our words.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read James 3:2-12.*

IMAGES | Bits, Rudders, and Sparks

- James uses a lot of word pictures to help us understand the power of our words.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *As you talk about each example, show an image on screen like [this horse and bit](#), [this airplane rudder](#), and [this spark](#).*
 - **THE BIT:** This small piece of metal lets humans guide huge animals with very little effort. In the hands of any rider, the bit is a helpful tool that keeps both human and horse on the right track.
 - **THE RUDDER:** James writes about the rudder of a boat, but maybe you're more familiar with airplanes. Can you spot the rudder on an airplane? It's that tiny flap on the very back of the tail. Isn't it amazing that such an enormous machine is steered by such a small thing?
 - **THE SPARK:** We use small controlled sparks to light candles, campfires, fireplaces, and stoves. But an uncontrolled spark (like our uncontrolled words) can cause a significant amount of damage.
- The words we say might seem small, but they have the potential to make a significant impact. And when the words we say are harmful, the harm they cause can be significant too.
- You can see James lamenting in this passage about how difficult it is for us to control our tongues. We say hurtful things one minute and then turn around to pray or sing a worship song the next. He's frustrated and fed up — probably with himself as well as with others.

SCRIPTURE | Mark 7:6-8, 20-23

- Remember when we said James often retold the teachings of Jesus in his own words? Let's take a look at one time when Jesus said something that sounds familiar.
 - In this passage, some religious leaders showed up to exchange words with Jesus. They didn't like the radical things Jesus had to say, so they often picked fights with Him.
 - This time, they tried to debate Jesus about the way His followers were eating. According to these leaders, Jesus' friends weren't following the right religious rules around food.
 - Let's see how much Jesus actually cared about His disciples' eating habits.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Mark 7:6-8, 20-23.*
- Here, we can make some important observations about words.
 - **Jesus' words might sound harsh.** He isn't cruel, but He calls the religious leaders hypocrites and doesn't hold back from telling them the truth.
 - **God doesn't want our hypocritical words.** No matter how many words we use to pray or worship, God isn't impressed with the holy things we say when we're also using our words to hurt others.
 - **Our words reflect our hearts.** Jesus reminds us to look at what's in our hearts, because what's in our hearts determines what comes out of our mouths. If we're filled with greed, pride, or jealousy, it's not just our words we need to address — it's our hearts.
- Both Jesus and James knew this was true: the words we say matter because they're a reflection of who we really are. So we need to watch what we say and watch what's in our hearts.
- Can you imagine how your family, friends, school, or the world, could be different if we decided not to use our words like weapons? If we could find a new way to use our words, the change would be radical.
- So do you want to see that radical change? Are you not sure what you think about Jesus yes, but you know you want to see more good and less hate in the world? Then James tells us how to love like Jesus: **radical people watch their words.**

NOW WHAT?

STORY | Talk about how someone's words encouraged you.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story from your own life (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time when someone's words helped, inspired, or encouraged you. Share what they said, how it made you feel, and how it impacted your life, perspective, or beliefs about yourself.*
- Sometimes it's easier to remember the hurtful things that have been said to us than it is to remember the encouraging things, but people's encouraging words stay with us too. Even if we can't remember them word for word, we remember the way their words changed us.

OBJECT LESSON | Tattoos

- Since James used lots of object lessons to talk about words, I'm going to give you a few as well.
- Words are kind of like tattoos. Once you get one, it doesn't go away. It might fade slightly over time, and you could try to have it removed or cover it up with another tattoo, but the message of the original will be etched onto your skin for life.
- Like a tattoo, you can't take back the words you say.
 - Yes, you can apologize for hurtful things you've said, but the wounds left by your words won't simply disappear.
 - But your words of love, hope, and encouragement won't disappear either. They leave a mark that lasts.

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - **What's the nicest thing anyone has ever said about you?**
 - **Has anyone ever hurt you with their words? How did you react?**
 - * **Has there ever been a time when your words made an impact on someone you didn't expect? What happened?**
 - **Read Luke 6:27-28. When people hurt us with their words, what could it look like to put these words of Jesus into practice?**

OBJECT LESSON | Binoculars

- That's why it's so important to watch our words carefully, as if we're using binoculars. When

we speak, we need to look at our words up close.

- Here's what to do with what we see.
 - **WONDER ABOUT YOUR WORDS.** Whether you're speaking in person or online, pay attention the words you say. Are they hurtful? Helpful? True? Kind?
 - **SPEND EXTRA TIME THINKING BEFORE YOU SPEAK.** Before you send that text, post that comment, or make that joke, pause for a little bit longer than you usually would. It's so easy to be careless with our words, but this pause can help us think about the impact our words make.
 - **FORGIVE WHEN WORDS HURT.** We can't forget, un-hear, or un-say hurtful words, but we can forgive ourselves and others when words hurt. Forgive each other. Forgive yourself. We're all still growing and learning.
 - **CHOOSE WORDS THAT HELP.** Watching our words doesn't mean staying silent or only saying "nice" things. Like Jesus, sometimes we need to say words that are true even if they're uncomfortable. So how do we know what to say? Try saying words that help, uplift, speak truth, or challenge others to be more like Jesus.

RESPONSE | Watching (and Writing) Your Words

- This week, I want to encourage you to watch your words by writing down your words. You can use the paper we've given you or you can take notes on your phone, but here's what I want you to do each day:
 - Write down at least one thing you said (either hurtful or helpful).
 - If it was hurtful, ask God to help you understand why you said what you did. Ask for strength and healing to be different. Then make it right with the person you hurt.
 - If it was helpful, ask God to help you use more of your words to love others like Jesus would.
- It's not easy to be so careful about our words, but that's the point! Radical, important, world-changing things are never easy.
- This week, will you decide to do something simple, but difficult? Will you do something radical? Will you strive to love God and others with the words you say? I hope so! Because **radical people watch their words.**

DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*
 - * **When are you most prone to being reckless with your words? What kind of harm have your reckless words caused?**
 - * **What kind of good do you think you could do this week by speaking helpful words?**
 - **This week, what's one thing you are going to do to watch your words?**

OBJECT LESSON | Tattoos and Warheads

- **INSTRUCTION:** *If you'd like, pass out one or two items to students on their way out. First, a temporary tattoo. Second, a [super sour Warhead](#) — while the candy is sour, have students think about hurtful things they've said recently. When it turns sweet, have them think about encouraging things they could say instead.*