

LOVING WITH YOUR WORDS

40 Days of Love, Part 3

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How is 40 Days of Love going? Not all easy things is it, love isn't always easy. Relationships aren't always easy.

In this series we're looking at how God loves us and what that means about the way that we love each other. If you missed the first few sermons in this series, you still have time, there's still time for you to get in a group if you'd like to. Make sure you get with one of the directors and get signed up for a home group.

This morning we're going to be talking about what relates to every one of us when it comes to making love work in relationships, work in everyday lives. We're going to be talking together about how do you love with your words? How do you love when it comes to the all important subject of communication?

In the beginning today, I'd like to start with a confession. James 3:2 says *"All of us often make mistakes. But if a person never makes a mistake in what he says, he is perfect."* So I will confess I'm not perfect. I will confess that I often make mistakes and I will confess that when it comes to my words I often say stupid things.

Anybody want to join me in that one by the way? And by reading some for your Face Book post I am sure some of you should also confess you say stupid things as well.

It's the easiest thing in the world to say the wrong thing. It is so easy! In a few minutes, we will talk about some practical things that we can do in our communication that will really make a difference.

Let's look at James and Jesus as examples. James, the little letter in the New Testament that talks about how important our words are. Then Jesus and what he had to say about how we can begin to make some changes.

I want to start with not only seeing the importance of this but also some encouragement that God can get involved, wants to get involved desperately in this area of our lives and is willing to make a difference. You don't have to face this alone.

Here's what James tells us about what the importance of our words really is. *My mouth, my words, they direct where I go.* That's why my words are so important. They direct where I go. *My mouth also can destroy what I have.* Because they're so powerful, words can also be destructive. *And my mouth displays who I really am.* Whatever I am on the inside the way people see me on the outside is often through my words. The perfect example is when you hit your thumb with a hammer you will say what's in your heart.

James wanted us to get this so he gave a picture of each of these.

My mouth directs where I go. The picture he gave us of that one is the picture of a rudder on a ship. You see a small ruder guides a big ship. Even a great ocean liner is guided by a rudder. Our mouth, our words, our conversation is like the rudder to our lives. How many of us we've said something and the minute we've said it, we say "Oh how I wish I hadn't said that!" How many times have you sent an E-Mail or made a phone call that you wish you could have taken back? We know the direction it's going to take us. We can feel it. That's the power of words.

The power of words also is they can destroy what I have. The picture that James gives us of that one is the picture of a fire. A fire can be a good thing. But all of us know it can easily get out of control. We've all seen words burn up a job, burn through a relationship. Friends are like burning the pages of a book you wrote, it only takes a few minutes to destroy what took you a lifetime to write. That's the power of words, why you need to be careful with them.

Our mouth, our words, they also display who we are. What you are on the inside is shown on the outside by our words. The picture James gives of that one is a picture of a mountain spring. He says you go to a mountain spring, if you know its good water; you're going to get good water out of it. If you know it's a poisonous spring you know not to drink there.

But here's the problem with our mouths. Good water and poisonous water comes out of the same spring. The same mouth. We've all seen this. One minute you're saying the most beautiful thing. Then the next minute the ugliest thing. Where did that come from? How did that happen? That's what gets a lot of us frustrated.

Look at what Jesus has to say about our communication. Where do our words come from? He tells us, **Matthew 12:34** "*Words flow out of what fills the heart.*" Whatever's in my heart is going to spill out in my words. It's inevitable.
(It is like the example of hitting your thumb)

You can try to keep it bottled up but it eventually spills out in some little phrase, some little way you say something it just comes out. What's in my heart spills out in my words. But that's not all.

There's another truth Jesus teaches us. Mark 7:15, "*Your souls aren't harmed by what you eat, but by what you think and say!*" So not only does my heart spill out in my words but my words spill back into my heart, into my soul. A lot of times we get this reciprocal thing going on where you feel anger in your heart so you speak in angry words. It doesn't make you feel better; it just makes you feel more anger in your heart.

A lot of you are caught in this trap right now. It's an easy trap to get caught in. How do you change it? How do you get some hope with it?

You can say, Jesus Christ, will you change my heart? I want to say the right kind of words, will you change my words thoughts I want to have the right kind of heart.

You ask for his help with both your heart and your words. And he will help. He will come and he will make a difference. God cares about our words because he cares about the way that we love.

So the encouragement is **I'm not in this alone.**

Today we are going to talk about some ways that you and I can love people with our words. Remember you are not in this alone. Jesus Christ wants to be a part of this in your life. So with that encouragement in mind let's dive in to some specific ways that you and I can love people with our words.

One of the ways to love people is with honest words.

1. Love people with honest words.

I would rather be separated by the truth than united in a lie.

That example comes from Jesus. Jesus, God in human flesh, who walked this earth. He has dozens of conversations. In those conversations you can see how he talked to people. And Jesus was honest. So when we talk about learning how to communicate we're talking about learning from the expert. I'm not the expert. None of us are the expert. God's the expert. You can see from him how is it we communicate that really makes a difference.

Honesty is a good thing but when it comes to Jesus Christ, and how he communicated, it is amazing. He had this honesty about him. It wasn't considered brutal honesty, just a clear honesty. It was the kind of honesty that changed everybody.

One time Jesus said to a group of people he was talking to that were struggling. He said you bunch of hypocrites. That's honest, you have to admit. That's honest. He just told them what he thought.

Another time one of his very close friends, his friend Peter, one of the disciples, when Peter was struggling he said, "Satan, get behind me." He did so because he was thinking from a wrong place. That is Very honest tough talk.

Jesus was just honest. But in a different way than you and I would be honest. So what was the difference?

The difference is he was responding out of honesty not out of irritation. He was responding, not out of anger but out of love.

When we look at Jesus' example we also look at our own life and realize it is a lot easier for us to be nice than it is for us to be honest.

But the problem is **nice doesn't change anything**. Nice doesn't **move** the relationship ahead. Nice doesn't **change** my heart or anybody else's heart. You don't learn anything through just being nice. The challenge in what Jesus said, if I want to impact lives I've got to be lovingly honest.

Even sometimes as parents we want to be nice to our kids so we're not honest with our kids because we want them to think good of us. But if I'm just nice, if I'm not honest, it's not going to change my heart or other peoples' hearts.

How do you do it? How does this honesty thing work?

In Ephesians 4:15, it says, *"Speaking the truth in love."* That's how it works. It takes **truth** and it takes **love**. It takes both of those things, both truth and love. It can't be one or the other.

We're talking about truth but you also need love with it. People need to see you're telling it because you love them; you care about them, not just because you want to hurt them.

It takes truth and love.

Remember all things in life that hurt you are not meant to harm you; an example we discovered in our home group in the Boundaries bible study was going to the dentists to have a tooth filled or pulled may hurt you, however be good for you in the long run. In the same respect everything that tastes or feels good to you is not always helpful. Another example is a child that always wanted to eat sugar; we all see where this is going.

Another great verse is Proverbs 27:5. *"An open rebuke is better than hidden love."* We all love to have people around us that will flatter us. That will tell us good things about us. That makes us feel good inside. But when push comes to shove in those intimate relationships and those really **close friendships, true friendships**, we want honest words. You want somebody who's going to tell you the truth when you have the wrong perspective and you're just not seeing things clearly. We all need those people in our lives who will share with us **honest words**. They're important.

Some people would rather have it strait, don't beat around the bush give it to me truthfully not holding anything back. How would you feel if you went to the Doctor and they wouldn't tell you the truth for fear it would hurt your feelings? It is the same spiritually. We need to hear the truth even if it upsets us.

1 Corinthians 13:6 says, *"Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth."*

Honest words have to start with honesty in my own heart. If I'm trying to be honest with other people I've got to first be honest with myself. So first I ask myself, have I looked at this in my own life?

When you ask yourself first, then they can see into your heart that you're doing this because you care about them and because you love them.

You love people with honest words. There's a second way you and I love the people in our lives. Love people with **careful words**.

Careful because words are powerful so you have to be careful with them. Every one of us, we know the impact of the wrong word.

These are three ways, three areas to be careful with our words.
Anger, Gossip, Too many words.

The first area is Anger. It says in Ephesians 4:26-27 *"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you're still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."*

Anger in communication can really make its way in and really ruin things. We experience anger in arguments. In close relationships we begin to have arguments. Everybody argues. Because of that we've got to learn how to deal with the anger that everybody has.

Because everybody argues we can see how Communication mixed with anger can become a battlefield.

And just like in any battle when you are faced with it we all respond differently. Some of us want to dig a fighting hole and hide in it. Some say I'll just hide here and wait until the fights over. I'll just watch and wait for the right time to strike. I'll wait out this battlefield, this conflict.

Some of us decide that we'll store up. We'll create a munitions dump so that we can store up all the stuff that has hurt us and is bothering us and that kind of thing then one day we'll just blast them all at once. Now you know I am not talking about anybody here, we would not do any of that.

My personal favorite in arguing is calling in artillery. Bringing out the big guns all the time. I don't save anything up. I use it all in every argument, always going in for the kill. The problem is when we treat communication like a battleground and we think that somebody has to win and somebody has to lose, the reality of it is we both lose. Or the whole family loses, or the whole home group, or congregation etc. basically all the parties lose.

What's really sad is, when we lose, the **Devil** is the one who wins.

Do not give the devil a foothold when you get angry. How do you not? We all get angry. We all have arguments. How do you not let **Satan** win? It tells us very clearly in Ephesians 4:26-27 *“In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you’re still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”*

It is God’s command that you don’t go to bed angry. It’s not just some advice. **It is God’s command.** Why? Because he loves us and he knows us, he knows how we’re wired, and if I go to bed angry and I let it go to the next day, anger starts to turn very quickly to bitterness and it gets harder and harder to solve.

The Bible doesn’t say you have to solve it immediately. Sometimes you do need to count to ten, take a time out. No doubt about that. Sometimes you need to walk around the block and calm down. But you deal with it before the next day. If you don’t God says, you’re giving Satan a foothold in your relationship. That’s a very dangerous thing to do.

It is like going to sleep with your front and back door wide open with all the lights on. You are just asking for trouble.

Here is a poem when we’re angry and need to be careful with your words by Will Rogers. “Be careful of the words you say. Keep them soft and sweet. You never know from day to day, which ones you’ll have to eat.”

Another poem by Ogden Nash is:

“To keep your marriage brimming with love in a loving cup,
Whenever you are wrong, admit it; whenever you’re
Right, Shut up.”

The second area that we need to be careful in, that we need to use careful words, is in the area of **gossip**.

What is Gossip? Gossip is idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affair of others, it is to spread secrets or rumors, false accusation or slander, or as stated to reveal personal facts about another... It is one of the oldest and most common means of sharing facts and views, but it also has the reputation for the introduction or errors and variations into the information. It commonly starts with “Did you know?” or “Have you heard?”

We can look at the Biblical evaluation of gossip and see;

It’s the Antithesis of righteousness - Lev. 19:16; Prov. 11:9;

Antithesis of faithfulness - Prov. 11:13

Product of corrupt mind - Rom. 1:28

Used by wicked people - Jeremiah. 6:28

Stirs up trouble - Jeremiah. 9:4

Breaks relationships - Prov. 11:9; 16:28

Causes anger - Prov. 25:23

Epidemic among those who do not know God - Rom. 1:28-32; II Cor. 12:20;
In short Gossip is sin – it is contrary to character of God

But again I am not speaking to the covenant members of Fil-Am because none of us really participate gossip. None of us are interested in gossip.

We all have been guilty of looking at the *National Enquirer* when we're in the checkout line at the grocery store to glance at the headlines.

In some churches they have their own little version. It's called prayer requests. That is one reason they are not posted anywhere and are not forwarded. They are not open to everyone.

What happens is we say, did you hear about Susie? We really need to be praying for Susie. Then go on to tell all the gory details of what's going on in her life.

A great definition I heard was, don't share anything with someone who's not part of the problem or part of the solution. That's kind of a way to deal with gossip in your own life. Realize how important it is that we don't want to have *National Enquirer* prayer meetings.

That may not be the issue with you but you still have people come up to you all the time who want to share stuff that you know you don't want to listen to. A couple of tips for that is ask them if they have prayed with that person for this situation. The best thing you can do is go to that person and talk about what they've done to offend you or a need in their life. Ask them if they've done that. Or the other thing you can do is say, "Wow that is an important prayer request. Can I quote you as being the one that shared that? (As I pass it on...)" This more than likely will stop the gossip from that person.

When sending an E-Mail about anyone just look at what would happen if you copied this person also on the email. This is probably going to get forwarded to them in the end anyway so you should think that whenever you write an email. What if I "copied" them also on this email? Would I say what I'm saying about them differently?

There are a lot of areas of gossip to work on in our lives. It is disruptive to relationships. Anger is, gossip is, and a third thing can be...

Just saying too much.

Words are so dangerous that saying too much can get you in trouble. Proverbs 21:23 says "*Watch your words and hold your tongue. You'll save yourself a lot of grief.*"

In Proverbs 17:28 it says, "*Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent. When they keep their mouths shut they seem intelligent.*"

I know at times we want to keep our mouth shut but just don't seem to possess the ability, and we wind up digging yourself deeper and deeper into a hole.

Proverbs has so much to say about our words. It talks about lots of different benefits of just not talking sometimes.

Proverbs 10:19 says you'll sin less.

Proverbs 13:3 says that you'll feel better.

Proverbs 17:28 says that you'll look intelligent.

As we're talking about talking less, I don't want to confuse this with personality. Some personalities talk more and some personalities talk less. Maybe you need to talk a little bit more and let people know what you're feeling and what's going on inside. This isn't a matter of personality. We have different styles of personality and that revolves around different styles of communication.

Basically you just have to figure out that it's just different styles of communication. If you really love somebody you'll figure out their style of communication.

So when it comes to the amount of words you use and how you use those words which personality is the best? The answer is whatever personality God gave you. These styles we talked about, whichever one you're wired to be. This isn't a matter of your copying somebody else's personality in order to have better communication.

It is about you bringing yourself and your personality into it, remember God made you to be you and not anyone else. If we allow God to work in all of our situation we will see that he will begin to breathe life into all of your relationships.

You do that by loving people with **honest** words, by **loving** people with **careful** words, and another way...

You love people with **building words**. In other words use words that build you up. Ephesians 4:29 says *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."* Are my words building? Are they building other people up according to their needs? Words can build or they can tear down. Words can build a marriage relationship or tear down a marriage relationship.

Words can build a child's self esteem or tear down a child's self esteem. Words can build a relationship or they can tear it down. We have to stop and think: is this going to build up or is this going to tear down? Is this what the other person needs from me or is it just what I feel like giving right now? How will it benefit the conversation, or the outcome?

This verse also talks about don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths.

Look at the word unhelpful. What does that mean? When you think about unwholesome talk the first thing you might think of is swear words. And obviously words that demean another person is going to be unhelpful, it's not going to be a healthy conversation. But that's not all that's here. We're talking about just something that's not helpful. There are words that we use that just aren't helpful. In fact you can take almost any word and begin to use it in a conversation in a relationship as a trigger word that's just not helpful.

One of those words used in a conversation when it's not going the way that you want, when it's getting a little frustrating is the word "Fine, or whatever!" You know what that's saying. That's saying I'm cutting off conversation. That's it. I don't want to hear any more. Have it your way. We all have different ways of saying things that just are not helpful.

The biggest thing that we have to do in this area is think before we speak. Here is a key that will help you chose your words. **THINK.**

T – is it Truthful? Before you say something is it truthful? Is it the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Is it twisted a little bit? Is it an attitude that makes you look better? Is it truthful?

H – is it Helpful? Or is it going to harm?

I – is it Inspirational? Is it going to build up or tear down? Is it going to give people hope and encourage and make them want to move forward in their life?

N – is it Necessary? This is that thing of talking too much. Some things aren't necessarily wrong to say. There's nothing wrong with saying them. They're just not necessary.

K – is it Kind? Haven't we been talking about this in our small groups this week in 40 Days of Love? Is it kind? Love is kind.

So THINK. Think before you speak.

As we close today I'd like to give you five specific powerful kinds of ways of speaking. Go through these, check one of them, or all five of them, and say, this is what I'm going to work on this week. This is what I'm going to work on.

So as we walk through these, recognizing Jesus Christ wants to be a part of our words, wants to help us and strengthen us in this, it's really an exercise in saying, here's where I'm asking him to strengthen me this week.

For instance, it might be with ***Kind Words***.

I just want to use **kinder** words this week – which are very powerful words by the way. The Bible says that kind words have the power to transform worry into joy. That's how powerful they are.

Proverbs 12:25 *“Worry can rob you of happiness, but kind words will cheer you up.”* A lot of times when people are worried, we tend to get anxious too and want to get them through it. “Come on! Get over it! You don’t have that much to worry about!” We use unkind words.

*It could be **Gentle words.***

Gentle words have the power to break through anger. Proverbs 15:1 says, *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* Gentle words break through anger. They’re incredibly powerful.

It takes great courage. In fact the word “gentle” literally means power under control.

*It could be **Pleasant Words.***

Pleasant words encourage learning. Proverbs 16:21, *“Pleasant words promote instruction,”* Proverbs 16:21 says. A lot of times when you’re trying to help somebody learn something and they’re not getting it, instead of using pleasant words we use louder words.

We just talk louder like maybe this is going to help them get it. It only just builds up a barrier. Maybe you’re trying to help one of your kids try to learn something. We’ve all done this. It’s pleasant words that promote instruction. Maybe as a parent you need this this week. Or maybe as a teacher you need to check this one.

Or maybe it’s **Honest Words.**

Honest words make us feel loved. When somebody flatters me maybe for the first time I think, “That’s sort of cool! That was encouraging.” But when I find out they’re a flatterer, when I find out they’re not being honest with me I don’t really want to hear what they’re saying.

If I find somebody who takes the risk to be honest then you feel loved. You feel trusted. That’s why the Bible says in Proverbs 24:26, *“An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.”* It’s talking about a kiss of friendship there.

There’s an incredible expression of love in honesty. Maybe that’s the one to check. Or maybe it’s **Wise Words.**

It could be wise words about God or about God’s word, or about God’s work. Encouragement in our hearts and in this world. Wise words can heal a broken heart. Proverbs 12:18 *“Thoughtless words can wound as deeply as any sword, but wisely spoken words can heal.”* That’s the power in our words. The power to heal a broken heart. The power to promote learning in somebody’s life, to break through anger.

The whole concept is that of investing your words. If you thought through the last three or four months and thought through every time you said a building word and gave yourself twenty dollars in a bank account every time you said a building word, and thought through every time you said a tearing down word and took away twenty dollars from that bank account. Would you be ahead or behind right now when it comes to the investment of your words?

We've thought a lot these last couple of weeks about the investment of money with the roller coaster in the stock market and the financial markets, as we went through the Total Money Makeover with Dave Ramsey, as well as Building Dynamic faith with Jerry Farwell. We see there are many things that are important to us. It's important what's going on with the financial markets. But you know what's more important. A more important investment is an investment of your words.

Without a shadow of a doubt! Our finances they're just going to last as long as we're on this earth. But our words? Jesus said that at the last judgment we will be called to account for every careless word that we've been speaking.

In Matthew 12:36-37 it says, *"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

We will be given a reward for every building word that we speak. That's how long the investment of your words is going to last. Not only in people's lives now but all the way into eternity. That's how powerful your words are.

In light of that, I don't know about you, but I need God's help. I need God's help with my words. So I'd like to end with just a simple prayer together to ask for God's help.

Prayer:

I invite you to join me in this prayer. You might just say these words back to God in your Heart: "Lord, do something with my words this week. Instead of me trying to control my tongue, I'm trusting you. I trust you to guide my words. I'm asking for your help. I'm asking for your strength. Jesus, guide me into honest words. Honest words of love. Guide me into careful words of love. Guide me into building words of love. I'm asking for your help because I know you love me. I ask for it in Jesus' name. Amen."