

LOVING WITH MY LANGUAGE, JAMES 3:1-12, 1 COR.13:6

40 Days of Love #3

◆ **Intro:** Welcome into our third week in our 40 Days of Love campaign. Today would be Day 15 in the devotional *Relationship Principles of Jesus*. If you're following in it and you find yourself behind, I suggest you pick up on the day it is and proceed from there. In Week 1 we considered how love and relationships are at the center of our life's purpose. In Week 2 we pondered how Jesus loves and accepts people in spite of flaws or spots, or repulsions, and how we are to copy that. Today I want to think with you about how we actually communicate love. Both love, and language are attributes of God himself. We call them communicative attributes because as image bearers of God, we humans also share those characteristics. While other creatures do communicate in some fashion, none but mankind have language. And you guessed it; language is a powerful tool when it comes to communicating love.

◆ But language can be very tricky as you probably know. Here's a few silly examples:

◆ Anyone know the plural of "tooth"? (Teeth) How about the plural for booth? Goose? Moose?

◆ Is there any egg in eggplant? Any ham in hamburger? No, just as there is no pine or apple in pineapple. Who made these things up?!

◆ Our English language is full of paradox: quicksand works slowly; boxing rings are square, guinea pigs are not from Guinea, nor are they related to bacon in any way!

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◆ You get the picture. Even our terms don't always follow clear rules. And yet being able to speak is one of the highest creations of God. As such it plays a huge part in communicating love.

◆ **1. Because language is so powerful, you and I can fill, or empty someones heart with our words!** This is James

teaching in his letter to the early Christians spread around the Mediterranean. There's power in the mouth. Consider how you use it. It looks small, like a rudder, (We use that as an excuse, don't we? "All I said was...". Don't ever say that. Experts tell us that 55% of communication is nonverbal language. 38% is tone of voice, and 7% is the actual term or word choices.) But one little piece of wood (rudder) can turn a whole ship! The tongue can burn up a relationship or it can build up a relationship. The right words can calm a person, or harm a person. A single word can inflame a person, or warm a person. And do you know why? Words reveal the heart!

◆ Where does good/evil exist? In the heart of a person. (The sense of morality is another attribute that makes humans unique among creatures. We know there is such a thing as right/good, and wrong/bad.) And good/evil is defined by the presence or the absence of love, all of which abide in the heart. Jesus said

◆ "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."
Matthew 12:34, and

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◆“..evil words come from an evil heart and defile the person who says them. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all other sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander.” Matthew 15:18, 19, NLT.

◆Do you find it interesting that in Jesus list of evil things, sins of the mouth rank right up there with stabbings and affairs? The fact is, that you and I, fallen creatures but also Christians, have potential evil and potential holiness inside of us all the time. And one of the easiest ways for other people to see what’s there is through our words. So *the tongue can release my inner sin and hate into the world! And the tongue can release holiness and love into the world!* Men, this is especially a place where we need to step up! For example:

◆50% of wives say their husbands don’t communicate.

◆25% of young people say they’ve never had one meaningful conversation with their father! Can you believe it?

◆86% of divorced couples cite poor communication as the number one reason.

◆In the book *The Blessing*, the authors point to the significance of upbuilding words for a child’s health citing the film *Cipher in the Snow*, the true story of young boy named Roger, who actually died on the way to school one day and the resulting confusion over the reasons. A quiet, unnoticed

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kid, one day Roger staggered wide-eyed to the front of the bus. The driver pulled over asking what was wrong. Roger shuffled off the bus and collapsed in the snow. Medical records indicated no history of problems. The autopsy shed no light on his death. Only after an interested teacher looked into his school and family background were the reasons for his death discovered. Roger's life had systematically shut down. He'd been a good student up until his parents divorce. His step father didn't have time for him and resented the attention his mother gave, so he limited it. School work plunged. Roger seemed apathetic. Teachers gave up on him left him to work alone. Roger stopped talking, so soon other children stopped trying. He withdrew into a painful silence which he couldn't endure. Roger was killed by a lack of encouragement and love.

◆ Don't leave love unspoken! Not only are so many of us not using our mouths to unleash love into the world, many of us are flat out not using our mouths/words at all! We leave unsaid that small positive feeling of appreciation for another's kindness, or dependability –that if simply spoken could make another person rise, buoyed up on the simple awareness of value. We think we will give someone a "big head" so we don't compliment. We worry that pointing at something good will make our child proud, so we don't mention it. We think they should know we love them, so we

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don't say we love them. This is deadly deadly road, people. No follower of Jesus may chose such a road. People need to be told they are loved every day!

◆ *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you." Proverbs 3:27-28, NASB.*

◆ You've run into this text in the small group study. This version is better, I think, than the NIV which says "from those who deserve it." The Hebrew term has the sense of what "ought" to be, not a sense of merit on the person's part. And who "ought" we being doing good to? Everyone who needs not just those who achieve! The Bible tells parents to love their children and to love their neighbors – but never with a view toward merit! But because it ought to be! That is why we exist, to love God and each other. So here's an application: Good ought to be valued and recognized. So when I see it, I should affirm it.

◆ [I recall a word of affection my father spoke many years ago, in the living room, next to the tan chair with the steel legs, in the house in Villejo CA, when I was in second grade! He said I had a "good imagination." I didn't even know for sure what that was, but it was a big word so it must be something! It stuck. I beamed.

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I felt valuable. There was something about me that my dad liked, and affirmed. Every kid wants that. Every daughter. Every wife. Every husband. Every son. Everybody longs to be loved! And you can do it so easily with your language!

◆ You've heard the stats I'm sure. I've read many versions of them. Some say that psychologists say we need 9 compliments for every complaint just to remain hopeful. Some say it's 3 to 1. I don't know, but I'm sure you know that one criticism can preoccupy your week more than a handful of people saying nice things. Why is that? Do you see why the Bible says

◆ *"The tongue has the power of life and death..."*

Proverbs 18:21, NIV.

◆ **2. I can build someone up best when I speak the truth, in love. Ephesians 4:15.** Now language and communication is no simple thing as we've seen. I mean look at the variables!

There's:

- ◆ a. What you meant to say.
 - ◆ b. what you actually said.
 - ◆ c. what I heard you say.
 - ◆ d. what I thought I heard.
 - ◆ e. what I say about what I think you said.
 - ◆ f. what you think I said, about what I think you meant!
- ◆ A. When untruth is spoken, people get broken. Let's name some examples of speaking shaded truth: [Lying. Flattery. False

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promises. Silent by-standing. Gossip.] All these things destroy, right? If the medicine bottle doesn't tell the truth about what's in it, I'm risking my life. If you don't tell me that I hurt your feelings, I lose the chance to apologize, and our relationship remains strained. You get the idea. Paul says that "love rejoices in the truth" because love delights in blessing the beloved and truth blesses.

◆ *"An open rebuke is better than hidden love!" Proverbs 27:5 (NLT)*

◆ *"An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips." Proverbs 24:26*

◆ B. On the other side; truth sprayed all over like an AK-47, without love, can also be destructive. Don't shoot people with the truth. Inject it lovingly, like a doctor not a soldier.

◆ *"Watch your words and hold your tongue; you'll save yourself a lot of grief." Proverbs 21:23 (Msg)*

◆ There is a difference between speaking out of humble honesty and speaking out of honest irritation. Jesus said some hard things during his ministry, but never with disgust or irritation. There is a difference between speaking out of humble honesty and just being nice. Being nice can be all about you and how you think you look to others. Being nice can be a way to avoid really caring. Nice isn't necessarily love just as truth can be told without love. ("Preacher says to tell the truth: you've got bad breath and those pants are so out right now!") That might be

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true, but people have this things we call "feelings". Love cares about the feelings as well as the truth.

- ◆ Lets take an example. Lets say you promise your family you will always wear a helmet on your motorcycle. Lets say someone reminds you of your promise after you don't keep it. Lets say you respond like a typical man: "Well, it's an honest mistake. Besides, I was careful and drove slower than usual. Anyhow it's fun to feel the wind in your hair. And who wants helmet hair, right? So back off! (Did I mention that this is all hypothetical?) How effective do you think that was... er, would be? How about this one: "You're right. It is safer. I did promise. I'm sorry. I'll take it more seriously." Did one or those generate love?
- ◆ C. One greatly underused way to love with your language is empathy. Lets distinguish empathy from sympathy. Sympathy is feeling with another person (syne, pathos; with/along-suffering/feeling). Empathy is entering in, showing them you feel it. (en-pathos; in-suffering/feeling). Psychology uses the word to describe when we let the other person know that we understand them, hear them really. It's called showing empathy. So your friend says, "I'm exhausted after yesterday." You can do what most of us do, compare:
 - ◆ "Ya think I had it easy?" *You shouldn't be tired. You got more sleep than me and I'm not exhausted.* (Oh. Well, suddenly I feel bursting with energy!)

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◆ Or you can judge:

◆ "Awe buck up ya wusie-pants. Poh baby, does oo wan a baba?" (Aren't you glad you shared?)

◆ Or you can be empathetic:

◆ "Sounds like something really wore you out." (Now they know you heard them, and they can tell you care at least enough to have really listened.)

◆ **Conclusion:** Here's what God's word is telling us on the subject of love today: Use your words to love. Use your language to build people. Good use of words enlivens people. That takes careful attention because of the intricacies of communication. In a culture where a *slim* chance and a *fat* chance of getting your point across mean the same thing, while a wise *man* and wise *guy* are opposites –speaking truth takes some doing. Now where will we ever get the energy to rise to this?? We can take our cue from God who *spoke* the world into existence, and then send his Son, also called his Word, into the world to sympathize (heb. 4:15), empathize, and redeem our sinful condition! Now that's real love.