



The Weight of Your Words - Part 3

If you've ever been crushed by someone's words, you understand that words carry weight. They can leave a mark, build or destroy, inspire or wound. In fact, our lives have been shaped by words spoken to, over, about, and at us. Words drive our confidence and shape who we see in the mirror, regardless of the intent with which they were delivered. Apologies don't reverse injuries. And while we're quick to recognize how the words of others have affected us, we aren't always so willing to take responsibility for the consequences of our own words. But for followers of Jesus, this is not an optional response— we are required to humble ourselves and re-center the person we have hurt by offering an immediate, unconditional apology.

Getting Started

1. What words have stuck with you throughout your life? Why?

What About You?

2. When it comes to harmful words that you've said, generally speaking, are you a fire *container/explainer* or an *extinguisher*?
3. Have you ever been on the other end of an explanation after somebody said something that hurt you? How did you feel?
4. Why do we rush to explain ourselves rather than simply owning our guilt? Explaining feels urgent and appropriate in the moment. Why?
5. Do you agree with Andy that the quick explanation that often follows hurtful words shifts the blame onto the *listener* instead of the person who spoke?

Look It Up

James 3:2 – 6.

5. Fire is a particularly interesting metaphor for James to use for the potential contained in every human tongue. Why do you think he chose this idea? What all might it mean?
6. The word “perfect” in verse two might be understood as “completely mature” or “complete.” What qualities do you associate with complete maturity?
7. Based upon what you read here, what do you think James would have to say about our attempts to re-center ourselves when we’ve said something wrong? (“I feel so bad.” “Let me explain what I meant.”)

Putting It All Together

8. What can you do to remind yourself to opt for humility and sensitivity rather than an explanation next time you start a word fire?
9. How can you intentionally elevate other people in the ways you speak this week? What habits might keep this goal in the front of your consciousness? What role does prayer have to play in this process?
10. Who have you hurt with your words, regardless of your intentions? Would you commit to making an unconditional apology this week?
11. What would it look like to “pre-empt” the urge to explain yourself? How can you detect it and deal with it earlier?