



# AWAKEN TO BLESSING

May 2 | Devotionals

## Day 1 - Devotion

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” These or similar words have been spoken by many bullied children on playgrounds all over. The gusto behind the phrase hoping to ward off the words that were sure to scar. Maybe you’ve even shouted these words on a playground or in a living room before. Maybe even as they left your lips, you knew those words wouldn’t protect you from the hurtful words spoken. Words make pretty terrible shields.

We all carry words that have wounded. Words that have resounded over and over again in our minds, maybe even affecting our identity. We’ve also all spoken words that have wounded others.

Words matter.

James uses his words in **James 3:1-12** to remind us of the power the words our tongues speak can hold for good or for evil. “The tongue is a fire,” he writes, “It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (**James 3:6**). Fire is a great analogy for the power of the tongue. Fire in its rightful place, contained in a fire pit or a fireplace can bring great delight. It’s beautiful, warming you on a cold night. Fire out of control ravages whatever is in its path without consideration. It damages. It devastates. It destroys.

What kind of fire is *your* tongue?

Really. Take a moment to consider that question: what kind of fire is your tongue? Does your tongue bring beauty and warmth or devastating damage?

We have all had moments of destruction with our words. Words have power and aren’t easily forgotten. Pearl Strachan Hurd once said, “Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs.” It’s crazy to think that such a small part of the body can hold such mighty influence. So, what would it look like if the fire we started with our words was the kind that brings beauty, delight, and warmth all around us?

As humans, created in the image of God, we are the only creatures able to wound or build each other up with our words. No other part of creation has this ability. Our tongues are directly linked to our hearts. Whatever grows in our hearts overflows to our mouths and rolls off our tongues. Luke says it like this: “A

good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of **(Luke 6:45)**”

If our hearts are full of evil, we will speak hurtful words. If we are filled with arrogance, pride, selfishness, envy, bitterness, or anything that looks like these things, it will make its way out of our mouths through our words. The only way to truly tame our tongues is to surrender our hearts to God. To invite him in to uproot the evil in our hearts and replace it with his goodness through the power of the Holy Spirit. What kind of words will you speak?

Questions for reflection:

1. Think about the words you spoke yesterday. What kind of fire were the words you spoke to others? Delightful or destructive? Take a few moments to talk with God about your words.
2. How do you think the posture of your heart affects your words? Where have you seen your heart, rooted in evil, overflow in hurtful words to others? Where have you seen your heart, rooted in the things of God, overflow in blessing to others?
3. Write a prayer inviting God to help you tame your tongue. Ask him to show you where your heart needs some realignment with his heart. Invite him to do the work needed to help you speak words of blessing over those around you. Ask him specifically where your words are needed to heal someone.

## Day 2 - James Study Breakdown

Have you ever had the thought that your words just fell out of your mouth without passing through your brain first? It's happened to all of us. We've all stumbled in this. Today as we dive into this week's text, we want to think about how our words are rooted in the kingdom of evil or the Kingdom of God.

James reminds us that out of the same mouth comes praise and cursing (James 3:10). Our mouths can speak of two kingdoms. Our tongues can declare praise to the Lord while also bringing destruction to those around us.

Earlier James tells us that we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. This admonition should serve as a reminder as we read through the text today.

Think about how your words are rooted in a kingdom—the kingdom of hell (James 3:6) or the Kingdom of God—as you read through the text today. Read through the text with this particular thought in mind, inviting God to speak to you through the Scripture.

As you begin to read, close your eyes and take a deep breath. Invite God to use his Word to show you what he wants you to see today.

**Read through James 3:1-12 in The Passion Translation. As you read through the text, think about these two kingdoms—the kingdom of hell and the Kingdom of God. Notice how these two kingdoms are represented in the text.**

My dear brothers and sisters, don't be so eager to become a teacher in the church since you know that we who teach are held to a higher standard of judgment. We all fail in many areas, but especially with our words. Yet if we're able to bridle the words we say we are powerful enough to control ourselves in every way, and that means our character is mature and fully developed. Horses have bits and bridles in their mouths so that we can control and guide their large body. And the same with mighty ships, though they are massive and driven by fierce winds, yet they are steered by a tiny rudder at the direction of the person at the helm.

And so the tongue is a small part of the body yet it carries great power! Just think of how a small flame can set a huge forest ablaze. And the tongue is a fire! It can be compared to the sum total of wickedness and is the most dangerous part of our human body. It corrupts the entire body and is a hellish flame! It releases a fire that can burn throughout the course of human existence.

For every wild animal on earth including birds, creeping reptiles, and creatures of the sea and land have all been overpowered and tamed by humans, but the tongue is not able to be tamed. It's a fickle, unrestrained evil that spews out words full of toxic poison! We use our tongue to praise God our Father and then turn around and curse a person who was made in his very image! Out of the same mouth we pour out words of praise one minute and curses the next. My brothers and sister, this should never be!

Would you look for olives hanging on a fig tree or go to pick figs from a grapevine? Is it possible that fresh and bitter water can flow out of the same spring? So neither can a bitter spring produce fresh water.

**What do you notice as you read the text with these two kingdoms in mind?**

**As you read the text a second time, invite God to show you what he would like for you to be, to know, and to do as a result of reading this text.**

Write a prayer to God from this passage today. Use the words as a guide as you craft words in prayer and praise to God. Ask him to help you bring about his Kingdom with your words.

### **Day 3 - Scripture Survey**

As we look at **James 3:1-12** this week, we want to see what the whole story of Scripture has to say about this week's particular topic. Where else in Scripture do we find this same truth? How do other authors of Scripture support or expand on what James shares in this week's particular passage?

Take a moment first to reread **James 3:1-12**. Maybe even consider reading it in another translation on your Bible app.

After you've read through **James 3:1-12**, take a few moments to slowly read through the passages below. Take time to note any similarities you find between the passage and **James 3:1-12**. Jot those similarities down. Note if there are any questions that arise as you read. Finally, ask, "God, what are you inviting me into as I read and look through these verses?"

**Matthew 12:36-37**

**Luke 6:43-55**

**Proverbs 18:21**

**Galatians 5:22-26**

**Psalms 12:1-8**

**Ephesians 4:29-5:2**

## Day 4 - Story Work

You have a story of awakening. Maybe for you that looked a lot like James or Paul where Jesus changed everything in your life in an instant. Or maybe you've always had a constant awaken-ing. As you've gotten older, you've had your eyes opened more and more to who Jesus is and how that impacts your life.

Today we're going to continue looking at our own stories through the lens of James. This week's focus will be on how words have shaped our stories.

Reflect on your story using the questions below. Invite God to lead as you look back on the words that have been spoken over you and the words you've spoken over others. Ask him to lead you through the questions with his grace and love.

1. Where have you wounded another with your words? What regret do you carry as a result of those words that were spoken? Take a moment to carry that regret before God, inviting him to forgive and heal you.
2. Where have you been wounded by the words of others? Take a moment to carry those hurtful words into the presence of Christ, laying them at his feet. Ask him to exchange those words for words of life.
3. Where have you built up others with your words? What was the result of speaking words of life over someone else? Where have you been built up by others with your words? How did receiving words of blessing change you?
4. How has being torn down by the words of others shaped you? How has being built up by the words of others shaped you?
5. Take a few moments today to recall a specific story when words of blessing were spoken over you. Write it down today, thanking God for the ways it shaped and changed you.

## **Day 5: Hear & Do**

For this last day, let's slow down and pay attention to what God has been inviting us into as a result of this week's passage. Find a quiet space. Silence any technology around you. Spend some time reviewing your devotions from this week. We want to be hearers of God's Word and we want to be doers of God's Word. Jot down your thoughts to the following reflection questions:

**As you look over this week, what words, phrases, Scriptures, etc. have stood out to you? What was the most significant thing? Why?**

**Where else outside of your devo time did you notice "these things" pop up in your week?**

**What is God inviting you to DO as a response to this week's reflections?**

**Consider some of these suggestions as possible action steps as you step into living this week's truths:**

- Intentionally speak a word of blessing over someone today. Ask God who in your life needs to hear words of life, then say them face to face.
- Write some kind, encouraging words in a note to someone who needs to hear them and send it so they can reread it when they are down.
- Before you speak today, take a deep breath, invite God to lead your words with his wisdom. Consider using these questions that spell out "Think" before you speak.
  - T-Is it True?
  - H-Is it Helpful?
  - I-Is it inspiring?
  - N-Is it necessary?
  - K-Is it Kind?
- Consider where your words have wounded another. Invite God to lead you in apologizing for the hurtful words you've spoken.