



BIBLE EXPLORATION

NAME _____

WEDNESDAY'S BIBLE EXPLORATION

THE POWER OF WORDS

Many of you have probably heard that old phrase, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Mom's often use this phrase to try to make us feel better when someone has said something mean or hurtful about us. But anyone of you who has experienced hurtful words know that they are far more damaging than a broken bone. A broken bone, on average, heals within 6-8 weeks. The pain and damage caused by words, however, rarely goes away. You can hear them ringing in your head year after year. Each time you hear it in your mind's ear you can feel the pain ache almost like it had just happened. Words are an important way we come to think about ourselves. When I was younger people made fun of me because I was skinny and looked like Alfalfa (If you don't know who that is ask me and I'll show you a picture). Because of that I thought for years that I was weak, even after I'd grown big enough to beat up most of the people who had hurled those taunts at me. So let's kill the idea that words are "just words." Words are powerful. They are important. And as the Bible says, they can bring healing ... or death. Just think about the epidemic of bullying and the many boys and girls who have taken their own lives because of the words that have been spoken at them.

WHERE DO OUR WORDS COME FROM?

So words are powerful, but where do they come from? Obviously our mouth. Our pens. Our keyboards. But the Bible says something far more important about the true source of our words. If we ever to hope to use our words in a way that will honor God and love others, if we are ever to use our words to be the kind of christian leaders God calls us to be, then we must understand the following truths.

As you work your way through the rest of this Bible Exploration together, it will be far better for everyone, and far more interesting, if everyone works to participate. So speak up. Fortunately, the guys at the Leadership Advance are amazingly cool and will make fun of you. We're all learning together.

MATTHEW 12:33-37

The passage of scripture you are about to read together is at the end of a dramatic encounter that Jesus has just had. A man who was demon possessed, blind, and mute was brought to Jesus. Jesus healed the man, but the religious leaders (Pharisees), who had quickly developed a jealous hatred for Jesus, did not want to acknowledge that this miracle was evidence that Jesus was sent from God and should be listened to. Instead they said "he is casting out demons by the power of Satan. Now you probably recognize the stupidity of that argument. Jesus did to, and you can read about his response to their jealous stupidity in verses 22-32. But with this background I want you to read how Jesus concluded this dramatic encounter.

Open up your Bibles to Matthew 12:33-37, read it together, and then as a group answer these following questions:

1. What's all this talk about "trees and fruit" mean? What's the point Jesus is making there?

2. In verse 34 where does Jesus say that our words come from? _____

3. What does Jesus mean by “the heart?” _____
4. According to verse 34 what do our words tell us/reveal about our heart?

5. What are your thoughts about Jesus’ comment about words in verse 36 and 37?

MATTHEW 15:11

In this passage we find Jesus embroiled in another conflict with the religious leaders. This time it’s over the fact that Jesus doesn’t make his followers follow the custom of the Pharisees to have them wash their hands (ceremonially) before eating. Jesus responds that they have a serious misunderstanding of what is important to God. They are concerned that Jesus’ disciples are not following a man-made tradition. Jesus points out that they are violating God’s commands for the sake of their tradition. What’s more important: man’s traditions or God’s commands? Now let’s take a look at the actually passage.

Read Matthew 15:1-20 and answer the questions below:

1. What does Jesus mean in verse 11 that, “what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person”? Hint, Jesus explains this to Peter in verse 17-19. _____
2. What are some of the ways that young men struggle with false witness and slander?

3. What are ways that young men struggle with adultery and sexual immorality (consider Matthew 5:27-30)?

4. What are some of the ways that young men struggle with murder (consider Matthew 5:21-22)

JAMES 4:1

In the letter of the Apostle James he asks a good question. In the answer that he gives we see additional evidence of the source of our words.

Read James 4:1-3 and then answer these questions:

1. Where does James say our conflicts come from? _____
2. Can you see this in your own life? Share with the group. _____

3. What are some of the excuses we often use to deflect away from our own responsibility for our words?
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Hopefully you see by now that the Bible has a consistent message. Our words are important. They proceed from our heart. Therefore we can see the truth about what sinful junk still resides in our heart by listening to the words that come out of it. We can't blame other people or the devil for our words. They are ours alone to account for. But this is pretty bad news. What are we supposed to do now that we see that our words reveal the condition of our hearts? What solution is there for the ways that we struggle with what comes out of our mouth? You will be looking at the answer to this important question tomorrow morning during your quiet time but you should feel free to discuss this question now if you have enough time, or later tonight during your squad time.

Memorize the verse before dinner!

AN IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING “QUIET TIMES”

To be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ. In other words to be a Christian means we trust in Him and seek to follow His example. One thing that Jesus consistently did, even though He was crazy busy, was to set aside time to listen and speak to His Heavenly Father. As Christians (AKA Christ Followers) we must follow his pattern in order to be prepared for the excitement as well as the hardships that are part of the Christian journey. This is necessary preparation for spiritual battle. We listen to God as we read His words to us in the Bible and we talk to Him when we pray. So we strongly encourage you to take this time seriously.

This morning you have an opportunity to read and think over some of the words God has given to us. We encourage you to break this time into 5 parts:

1. **PRAY:** Before you begin ask God to sweep aside your sin and that he would open your eyes and your heart to hear His Word clearly.
2. **READ:** Read the passage of scripture. As you do so pay attention and also remember that it was written by people from a different culture so it might sound odd at times, but the truth is still powerful and worth the thought it takes to understand.
3. **MEDITATE:** Think through the passage. Ask yourself what might be new to you, how you might need to change your life, and how the passage can apply to you.
4. **MEMORIZE:** By memorizing scripture it can go with you anywhere and you can call it to mind when it is needed.
5. **PRAY:** Take some time to confess any sin you are aware of, ask God to be with you throughout the day, bring any fears or concerns to him, thank and praise him.

TIME TO BEGIN:

In the passage you are about to read for your morning quiet time you will hear the words of God through the prophet Ezekiel. Prophets were not fortune tellers. They didn't so much tell people the future, as they were the men God used to call his people out on their sin and back to repentance. They were the voice of sanity to people who had gone crazy in their sin. "Turn away from your sin and back to God" was their basic message. In this passage you will hear some good news. Even though God's people had made some terrible decisions God would eventually save them. These words are words of salvation. They are words of hope. They are not just words for Israel back in the time of Ezekiel. We find out later in the Bible that these words would find their greatest fulfillment when Jesus came to die for his people (that includes you, and me, and anyone else who has put their trust in Jesus alone for salvation, purpose and identity).

With that background in mind, read Ezekiel 36:22-32. Answer the following questions (If you need help finding this part of the bible don't be shy. Ask someone for help. Christian leaders don't need to pretend they know everything).

1. What are some of the main points of this passage?
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Go back and read verses 25-29 in order to answer the next few questions:

2. In verse 26 what does God say he will give those sinners he chooses to save? _____
3. Given what we learned yesterday about our words coming from our hearts, can you see how this promise of a new heart is the solution for the ways in which we struggle with our words? How is a new heart the solution? _____
4. What ideas in this passage encourage you the most?

5. Who is doing the work in these verses? What significance do you think this has? Why should this give us hope? _____

MEMORIZE THE VERSE BEFORE BREAKFAST!

MEMORIZE: By memorizing scripture it can go with you anywhere and you can call it to mind when it is needed.

PRAY: Take some time to confess any sin you are aware of, ask God to be with you throughout the day, bring any fears or concerns to him, thank and praise him.

THURSDAY'S BIBLE EXPLORATION

THE POWER OF WORD'S NOT SPOKEN

Today you are going to have some time to think about some of the powerful words that are often *not* spoken that should be spoken.

LIFTING THE BURDEN: CONFESSION

No one likes to look at or talk about weaknesses. This is especially true of sinful weaknesses. But being a Christian, and especially being a Christian leader, means being honest. One of the most important places we need to be honest is where there are problems and weaknesses in our life. As a Christian leader you must learn to acknowledge your own sin before you can address the sin in other people's lives. Confessing your sin is, therefore, not only a necessary part of becoming a Christian, it is a necessary part of becoming an effective Christian leader. Confession is simply a kind of truth telling. It is also a way that God has given us to unburden ourselves and to equip us.

As a group read Psalm 32:1-5 and answer the following questions.

1. In verse 5 to whom are we to direct our confession? _____
2. Why is this important? _____
3. What does God promise when we do?(v.3-4) _____
4. Why is this often scary, doesn't God already know? _____

Lame Confession

When we sin, it is always against someone: always against God and often against another person as well.

1. What are some of the features of a lame way to confess sin or ask for forgiveness?

2. What are the features of a real statement of confession or repentance?

Read James 5:16

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16

1. According to James in this passage who should we direct our confession to? _____

2. What is the benefit? _____
3. Why is the thought of confessing our struggles to others so often scary?

4. If there is anyone in your group who has taken the step of confessing a struggle to a person who was then able to help them, this would be a great time to share with the group and to encourage them with your story.

NOT HAVING ANYONE IN YOUR LIFE SAYING THE HARD THINGS (DISCIPLESHIP)

Read Proverbs 27:6.

1. What is this proverb telling us? _____
2. Why is this a hard truth to receive? _____

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

1. What's the main point of Solomon in this passage? _____
2. What does "falling" in our spiritual walk look like? _____
3. What are some practical ways that people can "walk alongside you" in your spiritual walk?

4. Who do you have in your life who helps pick you up when you fall, tells you the hard things etc.? If not, who could be that person? _____

A SUMMARY

- We should confess our sin to God, admitting our disobedience and asking for forgiveness. God is eager to forgive.
- We should confess our sin to those against whom we have sinned asking for forgiveness without making excuses. We should be eager to forgive those who take this hard step.
- We should seek out those who can help us, confessing our sinful habits so that we can receive help.
- We should seek out people to be in our lives who can walk alongside us, speaking hard words when we need to hear them and offering encouragement when we need that (often we need both at the same time).

MEMORIZE THE VERSE BEFORE DINNER!

YOUR LAST CHANCE ... KINDA.

This is your last opportunity to do a quiet time here at the Leadership Advance, so remember to follow the steps below to help you make the most of your quiet time this morning. This doesn't have to be your last quiet time, though, make a daily quiet time your most important habit as you go home.

1. **PRAY** - Example: "Forgive me and open my eyes..."
 2. **READ** - Expect God to speak to you and change you as you read. His word is a spiritual scalpel.
 3. **MEDITATE** - Think ... don't rush.
 4. **MEMORIZE** - God's word is a weapon. When temptation arises respond with God's word, like Jesus did.
 5. **PRAY** - Adore God, confess your sin, Thank Him, let him know your desires.
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WHAT DOES JESUS SAY ABOUT YOU?

The voices in our culture today are quite literally screaming. You are being told by teachers, peers, political figures, sports heroes, books, and pop culture icons that you have a right to determine your own identity and that no one can contradict that. "I get to define who I am" is the self-centered, man-centered view of our time. If you disagree with this idea it is likely that you'll get called some pretty bad words. But the fact is that God is clear: He is our creator, we belong to Him, and it is GOD, therefore, who determines our identity.

Though our words are important, it is the words that Jesus speaks that matter ultimately. So as we finish up our time together thinking about the power of Words it is important that we listen to what God says about who we are, about our identity. Could there be more important words than what God says about who you are?

Before you get into the passage this morning here's a little context. The Apostle Paul has just been talking about the way in which sinners are saved from their sin. His conclusion: God changes us, gives us a new heart that is able to trust Him, and it is this new ability given to us by God that causes us to have the saving faith in Jesus' righteousness that saves us. So this passage is written for Christians, those who have been saved and changed by the work of Christ. If you trust in the Jesus for your salvation then this passage is for you too. Keep this context and audience in mind while you read.

The passages below are both from Romans chapter 6. I'd encourage you to read the whole chapter but for this morning you just need to read these two portions of it.

Read Romans 6:1-4

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

1. According to Paul, we are free from the penalty of sin. But this doesn't mean we can live as sinfully as we want. What is the question that Paul asks in verse 1 and why is it important?

In verse 2 Paul says that "we have died to sin." In other words, when Jesus died, our sinful life died with him. And at the end of verse 4 Paul says that the result of this is that we are now able to "walk in newness of life."

2. What does it mean to walk in newness of life?
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3. Take a moment to pray and listen, ask God to show you ways that you need to live in the newness that God has given to you and write down your thoughts here: _____
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Read Romans 6:12-14

"12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

In verses 12 through 14 God tells us that we are not to let sin "reign" in us. Not to present our "members" (the different parts of our body and mind) as instruments of unrighteousness (sin). Think about how you've been living. How you've been thinking? How you've been using the life and body that God has given you. What areas of your life do you need to spend some time asking him to change about you?

In verse 14 Paul says that sin will have no dominion/power over you. This should be really encouraging because it means that even if you feel like you can never beat a particular sin, the truth is that in the power of Christ sin is not as powerful as it often feels.

Take some time to thank God that you can actually be free from the sin that is entangling you. If you feel that there are things in your life where you doubt you can change, confess this lack of faith and ask God not just to free you from sinful behavior, but to have the faith to trust that God can and will be true to his promises to rescue you from the power of sin.

Before you end this time be sure to:

MEMORIZE THE VERSE BEFORE BREAKFAST!

If you need help memorizing don't hesitate to ask someone. Humility is a vital point of character in a Christian leader.