

## Out of the Heart



**MEMORY VERSE:** “‘Your words will be used to judge you—to declare you either innocent or guilty’” (Matthew 12:37, TEV).



**WE TALK ABOUT GOD FORGIVING** our sins. But do we really understand what it means for God to forgive our sins?

It means that we were once separated from God (Colossians 1:21). But we are now restored<sup>1</sup> to Him through the death of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18). We were once judged guilty because of sins (John 3: 18). But we no longer need to fear any punishment (Romans 8:1). We were facing eternal<sup>2</sup> death (Ephesians 2:1). But we now have the promise of eternal life (1 John 5:12). How can we have all these great things happen to us and *not* be changed?

We are born again. We are new people in Jesus. We show this change in many different ways. What we say and what we think are among the most important changes.

That is why the Bible has so much to say about our words and our thoughts. That is why this week we will take a look at what the Bible says about what we think and what we say.

**THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:** What does James have to say about the power of words? Why does he paint such a negative picture? How does the Bible show Satan’s use of words? Why would God care even about what we think?

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 14.

<sup>1</sup>restored—to have made something as it was in the beginning.

<sup>2</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

**SUN THE POWER OF WORDS.**

“The tongue is like a fire. It [the tongue] is a world of wrong. . . . We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father and also to curse our fellow-man. . . . Words of thanksgiving and cursing pour out from the same mouth” (James 3:6, 9, 10, TEV).



The tongue can destroy the same as a raging fire.

Read James 3:2-13. What James says about words is true of both the spoken word and the printed word. How many people have been destroyed by written or spoken words? At the same time, how many people have been strengthened and encouraged by written or spoken words. Whether written or spoken, words are very powerful for good or for evil.

In the next column is a list of symbols James uses to describe the influence of the tongue. What point about the tongue is James making with each symbol?

Bits in horses' mouths (James 3:3)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ships (James 3:4, 5)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Fire (James 3:5-7)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Animals (James 3:7, 8)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Springs of water (James 3:11, 12)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Trees and vines (James 3:12)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



A grapevine cannot grow figs. A tongue should not give thanks to God and also curse other people.

James is saying that the tongue may be small, but it has a lot of influence.

The tongue’s influence for evil is great. In one place, he even calls the tongue “evil and uncontrollable,<sup>3</sup> full of deadly poison” (James 3:8, TEV). Clearly, James knows what words can do, so he is telling his readers to remember that because they are Christians they need to act as Christians (James 2:14-26). Acting as Christians includes guarding (watching) the tongue.

**What pain have you felt from someone using rough or unkind<sup>4</sup> words? What joy and happiness have you felt from someone speaking kindly to you? Why do you think words are so powerful?**

**MON LOUDMOUTH.**

**“Do not spread lies about anyone” (Leviticus 19:16, TEV).**

Leviticus 19:16 shows that even in Moses’ day, God’s people needed to guard (watch) their mouth.

Leviticus 19:16 uses a Hebrew word that means “to go about” as a slanderer,<sup>5</sup> a gossip, or even a traitor.

This word shows up again in Ezekiel 28:5. Using an earthly king as a symbol of Satan, the Lord says: “You [the king/Satan] made clever business deals and kept on making profits. How proud you are of your wealth! Now then, this is what I, the Sovereign Lord, am saying: Because you think you are as

wise as a god, I [God] will bring ruthless [cruel] enemies to attack you” (Ezekiel 28:5, 6, TEV). The Hebrew word for “business deals” comes from the same word translated “lies” in Leviticus 19:16. It is not hard to see that slander (lies), and gossip are Satan’s favorite tools. He is the greatest liar in all creation.

**What do each of the following verses tell us about Satan?**

Genesis 3:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 1:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

John 8:44 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Satan is a loudmouth, a gossip, and a liar. When we gossip and tell lies, we are showing Satan’s character, not God’s character. No wonder the Bible speaks strongly about words.

<sup>3</sup>uncontrollable—not controlled.

<sup>4</sup>unkind—not kind.

<sup>5</sup>slanderer—a person who tells lies.

Jesus has saved us. We have received forgiveness for all the things Satan or other people could use to make false charges against us. But we should be careful about what we say when talking about other people.

**How do we deal with someone whom we know is doing wrong? Do we say nothing about them while they are doing harm? Explain your answer.**

## **TUE** HISTORY OF LIES; WORDS OF TRUTH.

The Bible presents a long, sad history of untruthfulness.<sup>6</sup>

1. The first lie was the opposite of what God had said. This lie challenged both God's authority (power) and His perfect character (Genesis 3:16).
2. Early in the history of humanity,<sup>7</sup> it became clear that by believing Satan's lie, humans became strangers to the truth. They also began to show the enemy's untruthful character in their own fallen nature (Genesis 4:8, 9; Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 27:6-24).
3. Jesus showed that Satan used lying and dishonesty<sup>8</sup> more and more to gain control of the human race (Matthew 7:15; Matthew 24:23, 24).
4. Satan's works of deceiving people will continue to increase as time

comes to a close (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

5. At last, the sad history of lying and deceiving people will come to an end (Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:15).

**Summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29. What reasons does Paul give for warning us about how we use our words? What does Paul mean when he says that through our words we may impart<sup>9</sup> "grace to the hearers"? How do you understand Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29 when you think of the history of lies this lesson describes?**

There is so much in the Bible about being careful with words because words come so easy. All we have to do is speak. We would think very carefully before we speak if every time we opened our mouths bullets, instead of words, flew out. Words can damage or destroy people. This is why we need to watch our words carefully. At the same time words have the power to do good too.

**In Ephesians 4:15, Paul talks about speaking the truth "in love." What does it mean to speak the truth "in love"? Why is what we say, how we say it, or even why we say it, so important?**

<sup>6</sup>untruthfulness—not telling the truth.

<sup>7</sup>humanity—all the people of the world.

<sup>8</sup>dishonesty—not honest.

<sup>9</sup>impart—to tell about; to give; to share.

**WED** THOUGHT CRIME.

“A good person brings good things out of his treasure of good things; a bad person brings bad things out of his treasure of bad things” (Matthew 12:35, TEV).

In 1948, Englishman George Orwell wrote a famous story called *1984*. This story gave his vision of a world under tight control of government. Even wrong thoughts were to be punished as crimes.

Of course, the year 1984 has come and gone. Most governments today do not really care what you think. They are interested only in what you say or do.

But the Bible is clear that God also cares about what we think.

**Read the following verses. Summarize the important message of each one.**

Exodus 20:17 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 10:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 16:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 12:35 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 5:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

It is clear that God does care about our thoughts, our motives,<sup>10</sup> and our hearts. What we think, what is in our heart, influences what we say or do. Words and actions come from the evil or the good in our hearts. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 12.

None of us live in an empty world. What we say and what we do influences other people for good or evil. If we think good, pure thoughts, then we will say good, pure words and do good, pure acts. If we think evil thoughts, then we will do evil things and say evil things.

**Many times, the Bible warns about covetousness.<sup>11</sup> Covetousness is the one sin in the Ten Commandments that deals with thought. Why does God think covetousness is so evil that He should list it with murder and adultery? What is so bad about cov-**

<sup>10</sup>motives—reasons why we do and say things.

<sup>11</sup>covetousness—being jealous over another person’s things.

etousness, which is also part of idol worship? (Colossians 3:5). What other evils come from covetousness?

#### **THU** “THINK ON THESE THINGS . . .”

**“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8, NIV).**

We learned in an earlier lesson that words come easy. Do thoughts come easy? Words require that we speak. Thought does not require that we speak. All thoughts need is brain power. Thoughts come without any work on our part. Thoughts often come whether we want them to or not. The Bible tells us that we need to control our thoughts. How can we control our thoughts? Controlling our tongue is easier than controlling our thoughts.

The first thing we must remember is that thoughts do not come from nothing. What we focus our minds on, what we read, what we talk about, what we do, all influence our thoughts. Even as born-again Christians, we cannot have victory over our thoughts until we depend on God’s grace and power.

**What are the things Paul tells us to think on? Philippians 4:8. Make a**

**list of things that are pure, true, right, noble, admirable, lovely, et cetera. Then pray that God will help you think about these things.**

Nothing is more pure, lovely, true, and noble than Jesus. There is nothing in heaven or earth that shows us these characteristics<sup>12</sup> as perfectly as Jesus does. Daily we should spend time focusing on Him (2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:5), on His character, His words, His actions, His love, His mercy,<sup>13</sup> and His obedience. Then we will have more victories in all areas of our lives.

This is why personal devotional time is so important. We can begin each day reading the Bible, praying, and studying. If we do, we can get a good start on the daily battle to control our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

**Think about your own life. Look at your thoughts. What do you spend your time looking at, thinking of, and reading about? What changes do you have to make?**

**FRI** **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Christ’s [Jesus’] Object Lessons*, “Talents,” p. 337.

“You and the ministers will do well to review the closing scenes in the life of our Savior. We may learn important lessons on how Jesus refused to accept

<sup>12</sup>characteristics—what the character is made of, such as patience, kindness, hatred, and jealousy.

<sup>13</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

temptations. We would profit from spending a thoughtful hour each day reviewing Jesus' life from the cradle to Calvary. We should take Jesus' life point by point and let our imagination picture each scene, especially the closing scenes of Jesus' earthly life. We should think about His teachings and sufferings, His sacrifice on the cross for our salvation. Then we will strengthen our faith, increase our love, and become more filled with the Holy Spirit who supported our Savior."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374.



**Thinking about Jesus' life will strengthen our faith.**

"Life is a painful struggle for many people. They feel their weaknesses, and are unhappy<sup>14</sup> and unbelieving.<sup>15</sup> They

<sup>14</sup>unhappy—not happy.

<sup>15</sup>unbelieving—not believing.

<sup>16</sup>appreciation—when you let people know you think they are nice.

<sup>17</sup>sympathy—sharing another person's sorrow or trouble.



**Be the same as a cup of cold water to someone today.**

think they have nothing to be thankful for. Soft words, kind looks, and words of appreciation<sup>16</sup> would be the same to many struggling and lonely people as a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy<sup>17</sup> an act of kindness, would lift burdens from a weary person. And every word or act of unselfish kindness shows Jesus' love for lost humanity."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 23.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Matthew 12:37. What do you think Jesus meant when He spoke those words?

2. Why does Paul say in Colossians 3:5 that covetousness is idol worship?
3. From this week's lesson, what reasons can you give for having a strong, daily devotional life?
4. What other steps can you take to help guard your thoughts and your words?