

Sermon Notes: The Power of Words

Week #2

Introduction

We continue our post-Easter sermon series exploring “The Power of Words.” This week, we look at our families—whether those are families of origin, chosen families, church families, or some combination. Sometimes our family members know just how to push our buttons, and we are then faced with how to respond. Sometimes we are so comfortable with a family member that we don’t filter our words before speaking them. Our choices matter, our words matter, in how we treat and speak to those who are closest to us.

Illustration Video

<https://youtu.be/v38lu0Bi0Kk?si=4ius0QaCEWzimSiY>

A clip from the 1993 film *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, where a student seeks affirmation for his work and accomplishments as he continues to learn the game of chess.

Video Discussion Questions

1. The child in this clip is a young chess prodigy who taught himself the game, began learning speed-chess from someone in a public park (who generally played for money), and then began learning from a traditional teacher. This traditional teacher employs motivational techniques similar to this clip, filled with harsh words. Do you agree with this kind of approach to teaching?
2. The young player (Josh) is very direct in asking for the certificate. Because he’s so direct, do you think the teacher’s response is justified and/or appropriate?
3. How does Josh respond? Note his body language as you consider this.
4. Josh’s mother has observed much of this interaction, and tells the teacher to leave. Why do you think she does this? Do you agree with her?

Colossians 3:8-9, 12-13, 15b (NRSVue)

⁸But now you must get rid of all such things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices... ¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ^{15b}And be thankful.

James 1:19-20 (NRSVue)

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, ^{20c}for human anger does not produce God’s righteousness.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. The letter to the church in Colossae is to a group of Christians that Paul hadn't met. Even so, this letter celebrates their commitment to Christ and then argues against other teachings. The author emphasizes that Jesus is the fullest expression of God. Do you see this in the section of the letter selected for this week?
2. Paul's letter invites the recipients to new life in Christ. How do you understand this new life in Christ? Is it something you work toward?
3. Paul continues that the readers must rid themselves of "anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language..." Do you see these continuing in the world today? Do you need to rid yourself of these things? Explain.
4. What does it mean to clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience? Is this an easy thing to do? Why or why not?
5. Paul then writes of forgiveness. Is forgiveness an easy thing? What about gratitude? Why or why not?

Weekly Action

Consider a family relationship (*family could be described in many ways*) in your life that has been harmed by hurtful language. Perhaps you have been harmed, and perhaps you have harmed someone. Take time to lift this up to God in prayer, and spend time listening for how God would call you to respond. What—if anything—is God calling you to do? Is this an easy thing or a more difficult thing? If God is calling you toward some kind of reconciliation, what will it take to achieve it? Make a plan for your next steps.

Prayer

God of the Incarnation, even as we celebrate the Easter season, we know that your love continues to grow far beyond these few weeks. Even as parents watch tenderly and proudly as their children grow into adulthood, you hold us in your compassionate embrace throughout our lives. Guide us into mature faith, O God, that we might be like Jesus in our love, in our humility and wisdom, and in every word and deed. Shape us, inspire us, challenge us, and bless us with the voice to sing your praises. Amen.