

Communication, a Heart Check

James 1:1-22

Quentin Smith, June 21, 2020

Welcome this morning to Grace Fellowship Church here in Chilliwack, and particularly to our preaching on the YouTube channel. We live in Chilliwack, which is really in the heart of what's known as the Fraser Valley in southern British Columbia. And we are a Bible teaching church. And like most churches these days we have taken to doing some recording of the sermons in order to allow people to be exposed to the preaching of God's Word, even when we've had to stay at home. So, this morning I'd like you to open up your Bible to the book of James.

I want to talk about communication. Communication is one of the most challenging aspects of our Christian lives, wouldn't you agree? And this is going to be the first lesson in a mini-series on communication that I'm going to call "Taming the Tongue." It was Plato who said once that "Wise people talk because they have something to say; fools talk because they have to say something." And in those who come for counseling, difficulties with communications is a significant aspect of the of the issues that we see most of the time. There is so much conflict that we have in life that would be spared if we would do better in the area of communication. How we talk to one another, the messages we give, and the messages we actually hear. So much of the conflict would be spared if we would speak more kindly, act more godly, speak more humbly, maybe with some more gentleness and truthfulness.

I had just wanted to talk to you about communication from James 1:19-20 because that's a passage that biblical counselors go to quite frequently. But as I began to study, the more I realized that you can't really talk about communication in isolation. Just as every verse in the Bible has context, so too, communication always happens in context, doesn't it? And that's why it's so challenging because it reveals the context of our heart at that moment. It's like a loud hailer telling people where we are internally. And as such, it touches every relationship that we have, whether it's marriage, or work, or family, or church brothers and sisters because you see, we take *us* into every single one of those relationships. And who we truly are, is going to be communicated in and affect every one of those relationships. So, on my way, from verse one to verses 19 to 20 in chapter one of James, there was a lot of context and so a sermon became a series.

I want to share this week with you the first 22 verses of James chapter one; and we're going to do it from 30,000 feet. We're going to do an overview of the heart condition that affects how we communicate. I want to draw out some of the heart attitudes and expose why our communication is either good or bad. I want us to look at these heart attitudes because if we don't, if we try and launch off and fix our communication without looking at the heart, it'll be like trying to put a band-aid on an abscess.

I had a patient come in not too long ago who had a painful finger and she had been using a little nylon brush. It was painful along the wick of the nail and we watched it for 24 hours and it declared itself. It declared what was going on inside the finger because after 24 hours, it was no better. It was red and inflamed and I had to incise and cut away some of that nail and sure enough, there was a piece of that nylon bristle underneath the nail. It's only then that it could heal.

If we want to talk about doing better in communication, the abscess has to go; the abscess has to be lanced. And then we can start to do better when we look at what's going on in the heart, so I've called today's sermon "Communication, a Heart Check;" and I'm going to let our cardiologist James, report on how our hearts are doing. So, if you're taking notes, we are going to look at eight heart attitudes to improve your communication. Eight heart attitudes to improve communication.

The first one is humility. Read with me verse one of James chapter one. James says this,

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

Humility. The reason I say humility is because he starts off with that word "bondservant of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ;" and the Greek word is really *doulos*. It's slave. A few weeks ago, Grace Community Church announced that they are planning to produce what's called the Legacy Standard Bible, which is a licensed update of the New American Standard Version; and one of the changes is that *doulos* will be consistently translated "slave." I think that's important because when you think about bondservant it kind of lets us off the hook. We serve, but in our day, we don't get that same sense that we're owned by God. We have latitude where that word doesn't really give us any latitude. You see, slave is bound up in humility. Pride is axed as we get out the gate. He's three words in and humility exposes itself. I cannot elevate myself. I can't speak down to other people when my station is so low. When I understand that I am a slave of Christ, I'm not going to be as antagonistic because I'm not going to be speaking down from that sort of station.

Number two, insight. Let's read verses two through four.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

These verses tell us about another heart attitude, and that is insight. In order to have joy in a trial, you must have insight into what that trial is doing. You must have understanding about the

reason for trials. If you don't, when you are in a trial you are going to be stressed; you are going to be prickly. And if you do end up being stressed and prickly you will communicate that to those who are around. You have to understand that there's a good thing that comes from trials. You have to understand that though you would never sign on for it, God in His wisdom sends that to test our faith. To see if we will hold on, to see if we are genuine. Let me say this. There is a lot of fake news out there. There is a lot of fake faith out there, and we have to understand what that looks like. We understand that our search is for that which is genuine; even if you go and buy a pair of shoes, you are assured and reassured by a stamp on that shoe that says "genuine leather." Trials are that stamp of genuine on your life depending on how you manage.

So when you face doubts about your faith, ask yourself, "How did I do in that moment of testing? Did I just fall away? Did I persevere? Did the trial produce in me a determination? Was it an endurance?"

See two things happen in trials. One is God is glorified by the genuineness of our faith, and the other thing that is that that trial produces a perseverance and an endurance. And that endurance has its own result. That endurance goes on to produce maturity because James talks about us being perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. That's what it means we become mature. We're more steadfast. We're more deeply rooted, we're more convicted, and in a world of uncertainty, that is the cause for joy. You have to wonder though, "If God is God, and God knows all things, surely He knows that my faith is genuine before He puts me through that trial. Do I really have to go through that trial for Him to know if my faith is genuine?" That's a great question. Turn with me to Deuteronomy 8.

And while you're while you're turning there, the answer, of course, is that, of course He knows. Of course He knows whether one's faith is genuine, but I'm convinced that under those circumstances that He brings, He brings them so that who we truly are will be revealed. And we will see who we are. So many times we are blind to our own condition; but when it's revealed, when we pass the test, not only is God glorified but we get to see that for ourselves. Read with me here in Deuteronomy, chapter eight, first three verses. Moses is of course talking to Israel before they go in and take over the promised land and he says this,

All the commandments that I am commanding you today you should be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these 40 years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, that He might make you understand that Man

does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

There it is. The evidence, the element of God testing them to know what was in their hearts, to know how they would respond. But also, that He might make *them* understand that the need for food was not the primary need, and that they had to live on every word that came from the mouth of the Lord.

So number one, humility. Number two, insight. Number three is stability. Let's go back to James and we're going to read verses five through eight.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surface of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Here's the picture of somebody who is convinced of his source for help. He knows that he needs help. He knows that he needs to ask for help, but he doesn't need to look anywhere else but to the Lord. He's not like the person who's double minded. He's not unstable. He's not looking here and there, tossed to and fro by opinions. Indeed, why would he look anywhere else? If God who knows all things, and has all things, and owns all things, and grants and gives generously within His will and without reproach? Why would he look anywhere else? But the stable man asks in faith, knowing that he doesn't have to keep researching where he ought to go to find his needs to be met. If you're having to do that, that's a sign of immaturity. Constantly needing to reinvent how we approach these problems in life. Always looking for the newest thing to help us, the newest insight, the freshest approach. No. No. Just ask in faith knowing that God has to give you that wisdom because you don't have it. Just ask God because you know that all wisdom realized within Him, not you. Any wisdom we have is given by God. It's just as simple as that.

So how much time are we spending asking God for wisdom then, going to His Word to receive it in comparison to the amount of time that we're spending on social media, Facebook, the computer screens? How much time are you investing in watching and even maybe contributing to the ping-pong match of online debates? Of point and counter point, arguments on the internet, heated discussion in the defense of doctrine to the point of hostility as Christians, heated debates about the latest conspiracy theories, is that really helpful? Does that achieve what God wants to achieve for our lives? See, I'm concerned that that activity produces much more anxiety and frustration and irritability than we think. It causes those things because we don't have control over the issue that we're debating, and we don't have control over the responses of the people that we are debating with. And most times, we want them to just think rightly, and that means that

they need to think like we think. To agree with us, and if they don't, it causes us to be frustrated. And what ends up happening is that it has a negative impact. We take a prickly and frustrated heart into our relationships because trust me that prickly and frustrated heart from that encounter will be communicated to those around us. And unfortunately, that then becomes our testimony to the world online. These are things we must think about in our communication online.

Number four, perspective. Let's read verses nine through eleven together.

But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass and its flowers fall off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

James tells us that the person who doesn't have much in the way of material goods, the brother of humble circumstances, is to glory in his high position because he is less prone to become entangled with things. Materialism, the lust for things. And the parable of the soils tells us in Luke 8:14 that the seed that fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard and as they go on the way, they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of life and bring no fruit to maturity. That's much less likely to happen if you don't have all the worldly trappings and chattel. But the rich man has challenges too. The rich man is to glory in his humility because he knows that all of this is temporary. He knows that he has to give an account for all that he's been given, for the wealth that he might have, for the stewardship of that; and how he stored up for himself treasures in heaven where thieves don't break in and steal and the moth and rust don't destroy. He must remember this because where his treasure is there his heart will be also, and where his treasure is, he will be much more likely to defend and communicate that

We have to have an understanding of the brevity of life and that perspective because in the midst of our pursuits we will fade away. All of a sudden, we don't know how much time we have. We need to be careful with that time that we have. Verse 12, "so there is great blessing for the one who perseveres under trial because perseverance is a fruit of salvation." It's a fruit of the heart that knows God. It's passing the test. It's the stamp of genuine faith. You have to have genuine love for God in order to have genuine joy and persevere under trial, and not get carried away no matter what your physical circumstances are.

So to recap, what have we talked about so far? We've talked about heart attitudes. Heart attitudes that are going to be revealed when we communicate. When we open our mouth what's going on inside is going to come out. Number one, humility. That station as lowly slaves. Number two, insight. Recognition that God is at work in trials; sovereignly bringing glory to His name by exposing the genuineness of our faith and producing an endurance and that fruit of maturity.

Number three, stability. That settled knowledge and conviction that we don't look anywhere else for wisdom. We're not tossed to and fro wondering what life is about anymore. Number four, perspective. That life is temporary, that having both little and not very much represent challenges to the heart, and they're going to reveal where our treasure is; and our mouth is going to reveal what we are willing to defend because there our treasure is.

Number five, honesty; and particularly honesty regarding pride. Let's read 13 through 16.

Let no one say when he's tempted, "I'm being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

I know that I speak for all of us when I say that we battle pride, don't we? And we need to battle it. One of the hallmarks of pride is that is that pride doesn't want to be responsible. Pride doesn't want to acknowledge that we fail. Pride makes it much more comfortable for us if our failure can be put at the feet of somebody else, if the reason for our sin lies outside of ourselves. And that's how we live. If you're honest, you are a professional blame shifter; but I want to say to you that you came by it honestly. It's in your fleshly DNA because Adam in Genesis three, when he was confronted by the Lord to say, "What are you doing?" He said, "This woman that you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." And what did Eve say? "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." We do love to blame shift. We all have different talents and gifting, but we all excel in rationalization. "Yes, but." We all have the not so spiritual gift of justifying our own actions.

James stops us in our tracks. He says lust is our flesh, which rises up and produces a temptation, and when we get carried away by that temptation, when we get enticed by that, when it's unguarded, when it's unchecked, it grows. Satan has a significant role in that because you see, his method is to appeal to that which is already inside us. He appeals to that lust of the flesh. How does he do that? Well, he creates a banquet of opportunity to tempt us, and when our flesh connects with that smorgasbord of opportunities that he creates for us, we are vulnerable. And if that lust is not dealt with, if it's not turned from, if we don't flee, that desire and that opportunity come together and they mesh; and sin is born. And when sin grows up, and when sin is unrepentant of, and when sin reaches maturity, when we nurse that sin and it is accomplished, (the word James uses) it is brought to completion. It results in death.

James says, "Let's be real. Let's get this straight. You own this." But when we acknowledge that it puts a dagger in the pride. He says, "Don't be misled," verse 16. You have to understand this. You must think about this soberly so that you don't feel victimized. This is the reality of our

heart. When we do understand this, there will be humility, and we will be on guard. We will be alert and that shame that we feel over our heart that lusts will contribute to the humility that we need to feel as we live within its shadow, this side of heaven. So, number five honesty regarding pride is going to affect how we communicate.

Number six, understanding that we are loved. Understanding that we are loved. Let's read 17 through the first part of 19.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures. This you know, my beloved brethren.

We know from verses 13 through 16, that temptation doesn't come from God. We've said that comes from us and that it's lust and harmful desires, so what comes from God then? Well, James says that every good thing given and every perfect gift, these are the things that come from God. And James says that these things come from above from the Father of Lights. And he says, you can bank on it, there's no variation. There's no shifting shadow. He's consistent. He's the same all the time. He says the origin is the Father; He's the source. The source is the person, the person of God. And He's the Father of Lights, the ultimate light, the light of all lights. And that's such an amazing metaphor because light is the opposite of darkness, isn't it? Light chases away darkness. Light is a positive energy, it causes things to grow, light is sight, light exposes, light reveals the way. Psalm 119:5 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And although light does cause shadows when it eventually hits something, at its source, at its origin with God, there is no shadow. There is no variation. He is constant, He is unchanging, he is unchangeable. He's the same yesterday, today and forever; and that simply means that whatever gift He gives, whatever is true about Him, you can trust. Whatever gifts He gives will never be wrong. They'll always be right. They'll always be good and there will always be an endless supply of them.

Verse 18, "In the exercise of his will He brought us forth." That's an interesting phrase because obviously, it means to us that He exercised His will. There was nothing random about it; this was intentional. And "He brought us forth" means literally that He gave us birth. How? By the Word of Truth. In the same way as God created the world by His word, He said, "Let there be light" and there was. Simple.

We don't understand the mechanism of how He did that, but you know what? We don't actually need to. In the same way as the Word of Truth has caused us to be born again, He's told us simply that when we understand our sinfulness, when we understand and are broken about our sinfulness, and sincerely turned to Him in repentance, the blood of Christ washes away that guilt

and we are transformed. We are brought forth. We are born again. We are saved, and He says His Word of Truth accomplishes that.

There is a passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2:13. It says,

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

We haven't got a clue how God does that, but it appears that it's the influence of the Holy Spirit and it's the influence of the word of God that manifests that change. It's the word of God that does its work in us. I think that's accurate. I think we all understand the power of an influence. We ask people for opinions all the time. We asked for counsel. We might be significantly swayed by that opinion. Our mind might be changed by what somebody has to say on an issue, and we have greater clarity and direction because of the influence of somebody thinking on our particular problem. But how much more the influence of the word of God with the power that it had to create, and the influence of the Holy Spirit to make that change within our lives. A force that is so strong that by speaking, the world came into existence. Thank God that we don't have to understand how it works, but we just have to accept that it does work.

He goes on in verse 18, “so that” (there's a purpose clause,) just like the exercise of His will was intentional, the purpose that He has is intentional. And I wonder if you've ever struggled with your purpose? “Why did God save me? What am I here for? What would I be doing? What is this about? Well, here's part of the answer, he says, “So that we will be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.” His created beings both at the original creation, but also now at the new creation.

That “first fruits” really refers to the beginning of a sacrifice. It's the part of the produce, the harvest, that is given to God. That tenth, that first acknowledgment that, “Without you giving us, God, that produce, we would not have anything,” and so it's the desire to give that back to God as an acknowledgement. God who gives us in the first place the ability to harvest. But in the New Testament, the first fruits also has an additional meaning. It really means the first in a line of something to come. In Romans 8:23, Paul says, “Having the first fruits of the Spirit,” and by that, he means just that they were among the first to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

So when he says, “This you know,” he literally says, “Know this, my beloved brethren. Know this, you have been loved by God.” It was God's intention to give you every perfect gift, and a gift from God is something that is going to be unbelievably good. He exercised that will so that you would be a sacrifice or an offering to God.

Then we come to verses 19 and 20.

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

I want to put parentheses around those two verses, and I want to put them off to the side for next week. But just briefly, “everyone” that is no one is excluded, it applies to all “must be” that's the command; we all must be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” Why is that? Well, “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

If we are a sacrifice to God, if we've been bought, if we are purchased, if we are slaves, we have been brought forth and birthed as a new creation, our purpose is to glorify God. We are to achieve the righteousness of God. What we do must result in the righteousness of God. That which is right by God's definition must be accomplished in our lives. And the word is *ergazomai* from which we get the word “work” or “labour” or “ergonomic;” so that's what we need to strive for. That's what we must work towards. That's what we must accomplish, but something gets in the way. When we are not quick to hear, when we are not slow to speak, but particularly when we're angry, we don't achieve that. We stand in the way of achieving the righteousness of God.

I want to come back and we'll dissect verse 19 next time; but suffice it to say now to make the point that the things we do, reflect who we are. Those things we do can go against what God's intention is, and you'll remember that when Peter objected, and said to Christ, “By no means will I allow anything to happen to you.” What did Jesus say to him? He said, “Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's.” Those are some sober words for us if through our speech, and through our anger, and through our heart condition, we are actually standing in the way of doing the very thing that we were created in Christ to do and to achieve and to accomplish, which is the righteousness of God.

Let's move on. Number seven, determined. Determined is our seventh heart condition and let's read verse 21.

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all the remains of wickedness, in humility received the word implanted, which is able to save your soul.

That would “therefore” has such a such a settled undecided tone, doesn't it? “Putting aside;” Peter uses that idea in 1 Peter 2 “Putting aside all malice and deceit,” getting rid of it. Take it away; discard it. Paul uses a similar phrase in Ephesians 4:22, “Lay aside the old self.” Eject it. Reject it. All filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, that's all moral filth. Every vestige of evil's gotta go. That's the biblical concept of putting off.

Here comes the biblical concept of putting on. "In humility receive the word implanted." Take something from outside of you. Take something from outside of you that doesn't originate within you; you have to receive it and internalize it. This is the only time that that word is ever used in the New Testament. It means ingrown, or to be rooted in the fertile soil of the soul. "Receive that word implanted which is able to save your souls." *Dunamai*, dynamite, it has the power to save your soul. Put off evil, receive the word implanted. That's what we were just talking about. That's the process of change. It has the power to change what is going on inside us; receive it eagerly, put it on. Stop doing, putting off; start doing, putting on. Determined to live in that way. That's a decision, that's a heart condition, that's a stable place that you need to be where you're committed and convicted and decided to walk in that way.

Finally, number eight, authenticity. Verse 22,

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Make sure that you are doers of the word. We are studying our way through Ephesians, and we know now that the first three chapters of Ephesians talk about the Christian's position in Christ. It's all the doctrine that tells us about what Christ has done. To use a theological term, it's the indicative, the revelation of what God has done. Chapters four to six is the Christian's practice. So, you've got the doctrine on the one hand, you've got the life on the other hand, and authenticity means that they've got to show up together. The Word of God must show evidence in one's life. Your faith has to show up. It must poke its head out at some point. A tree doesn't hide its fruit. A lamp doesn't hide its light. The Holy Spirit cannot live incognito. Your witness for Christ should not be hiding in some witness protection program somewhere.

Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves. So, who is that? Who's that? You may know this person; you may be this person. Somebody who comes to church, someone who looks the part; but the hearing is not the right kind. The message somehow doesn't penetrate. The heart is scotch guarded to the Word of God. The seed that was sown landed on the path and the birds took it away. There's a lot of church going on. There's a great deal of church activity and church looking activity. Sermons are listened to, blogs are written, Bible studies are attended, these are some who are always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth because there's no true heart knowledge. There's no faith that's translated to life itself. There's no brokenness restored. There's no putting off of sin; there's no putting on of righteousness. It was the same in the Old Testament. The prophets warned, "In vain do they worship Me. Their hearts being far from me." These are deluded, churchgoing, unbelievers.

The book of Malachi, if you would like to open up there to Malachi as we end. Malachi chapter one. Malachi as you know is one of the Minor Prophets and he wrote in 433 BC. In 536, so roughly 100 years prior, the remnant of Israel came back in its first wave to Jerusalem from Babylon. Then Ezra began to rebuild the temple; and much later on at about 445 BC Nehemiah returns, and he rebuilds the walls in 52 days, if you remember. Malachi is writing after that by about 12 years, 433.

See Israel was taken to Babylon, because of unfaithfulness and now they're back. They're fresh out of Babylon. They're fresh out of that experience, but they grow tired of waiting for the Messiah and the prophecies of the Messiah, His return and reign, and so two years after being united around this project, around the walls being rebuilt, they begin to stray. They become apathetic. They become apathetic in their relationship to God. Let's just read the first 10 verses here.

The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains of desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness. Though Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins'; thus says the Lord of hosts, 'They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.' Your eyes will see this and you will say, 'The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!'" "A son honours his father, and a servant his master. 'Then if I am a father, where is My honour? And if I'm a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.' But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. "But now will you not entreat God's favour, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! 'I am not pleased with you,' says the Lord of hosts, 'nor will I accept an offering from you.'"

It's a sad passage; they start to question God's love, "How have you loved us?" They've forgotten everything that God has done for them. That results in sloppy living, sloppy worship. They don't show God honour as a father, no respect as a master. Their hearts manifest in their actions. It manifests in the sacrifices; they're bringing the lame and the sick. And they offer

those, and God responds by saying, “Try offering that to the governor and see if he’ll appreciate that. See if he accepts that.” Then in verse ten He says, “Oh, that they were one among you that would just shut the gates.” Why don't you just stay home I don't want you to offer useless fire on the altar. I'm not pleased with you. I won't accept an offering from you. Shut the gates close the doors. It's better not to offer a sacrifice than to insult God. Your Worship means nothing. You're worshipping in vain. And these are diluted hearers and it is the tragedy of that which is not authentic.

So, we all struggle with communication. And we all battle with taming the tongue, but you know what, we're never going to do better if we don't understand that the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. The dissatisfied person has a dissatisfied heart and is going to communicate that dissatisfaction. The fearful person is going to communicate fear. The heart has everything to do with how we communicate. The joyful heart will be able to be seen because that's what it will communicate.

So, James challenges us on number one, are we humble? Number two, do we have the insight to know about our circumstances, rooted in God's sovereignty? Number three, are we stable? Have we figured out that we're not going anywhere else? Number four, do we have that perspective about the brevity of life? Whether we have little or we have much, there is so much that we have to account for. Are we honest, especially with our pride in terms of how we love to blame shift? Do we appreciate how much we are loved by God with the intention of His will, and every perfect and good gift coming down to us; so that we would be a first fruit sacrifice to God? And as a result of that, are we determined to live lives that are worthy of the calling; to put off, to put on? And, eighthly, are we living lives that are authentic? because you can tell a phony from the minute he opens his mouth. Are we worshipers of God from the heart? This is so challenging to our hearts, isn't it?

If you're struggling with your communication, if you just know that you have to do better, maybe it's because you're struggling with your heart. And I think that's a good place to be. It's a good place to humbly ask God to help you. Why don't we pray together and ask Him for that.

Father, we just come before You recognizing though that we falter all the time with our tongues. And Father, You've taught us today that that's often because our hearts are in turmoil. Our hearts are unsettled. We have dissatisfied, blame shifting, dishonest hearts. We have hearts that have deceit in them, hearts that are hiding sin, hearts that do not like to be called out, hearts that would rather hide. We love the shadows rather than the light because the light exposes further. I just want to pray for all hearts, that Father, when we can confess these things to You, You can begin the work of helping us with our communication. You can help us by changing our heart.

We thank you, Lord, for the change and work that the Word of God does in our hearts. We pray that we would be more faithful to read it, to devote more time to prayer, exposing ourselves to the power, the dynamite, the dunamai. That is the Word of Truth that had the power to create the world and has the power to change our hearts.

We pray, Lord, that You would bless this time and bless every heart that has heard these words from You, Lord, and would you begin that work of change, that we might communicate much better? We ask this all very humbly only in the strength that Jesus Christ can give us and in His name, amen.

We'll thank you for joining us today. Next week we'll be back to talk about specifically what it means to be quick to listen and slow to speak. If you would like to know more about us or fellowship or ministry, please go to our website, gracefellowshipchilliwack.com, to know more about us; and until then, we wish you a blessed week.