

Over the course of her lifetime

- my mother became a wonderful cook

- she was especially good at baking - -

- and cookies and cakes were her specialty

- now my father

- is not a huge sweets and desert fan

- there is really only one desert that he dearly loves

- and that is Red Velvet Cake

- Specifically

- a Red Velvet Cake

- with butter cream icing

- made from scratch

- using his mother's recipe - - -

- Now the cake

- really is a lot of trouble to make

- so as general rule

- my mother only made that cake on special occasions

- like, for example, my father's birthday

- and whenever it came time to make

- a Red Velvet Cake
 - I always volunteered to help
 - because helping was of course,
 - was the best way to get to lick the icing bowl

- We'll one time while we were baking the cake
 - my mother told me
 - about the first time she tried to make a Red Velvet Cake for
 - my father's birthday
 - using the recipe supplied by my Grandmother Wertz

- Grandmother Wertz you see
 - had beautiful, fluid, cursive handwriting
 - which is nice for letters
 - but not always helpful for recipes
 - in this recipe, one particular step in the directions called for you
 - to heat a particular mixture until it thickened

- there was only one problem
 - the "h" in "heat" looked a great deal like the letter "b"
 - and so my mother tried to beat the mixture until it thickened
 - she apparently beat and beat and beat this mixture
 - and no matter how long or how hard she beat the mixture
 - it would not thicken

- one simple word

- made all the difference in the world.
 - One simple, incorrect word
 - changed the entire recipe.
 - one simple, misunderstood word
 - was the difference between a delicious cake
 - and an hour of frustration and confusion
- Now you wouldn't think something as simple
 - as a word or group of words
 - would matter that much
 - but it can - -
 - it mattered in that recipe
 - and it matters in our of faith lives
- James knew that - - -
 - James knew the power of our words
 - in our world
 - James knew that our words can tear down
 - and our words can build up
 - James knew that our words can be used to praise God
 - and our words can just as easily be used
 - to curse our neighbors
 - James wants us to know
 - that the words we use
 - the things we say

- are a window for the world into our faith in Jesus Christ
- and so James wants us to be sure
 - that the words we speak
 - reflect God's love for us
- In the previous chapters,
 - James has focused on our actions - - -
 - live out what you believe,
 - let your actions be an example of your faithfulness -
 - well here
 - James has moved from actions to what we say
 - and I'm convinced he has a very good point
- the way you speak to those around you
 - your family, your friends, your co-workers
 - the way you speak says something about you
 - and says something about what you think of others
 - if you are always harsh and mean
 - you communicate your dislike or distrust of a person
 - if you are patient and kind with your words
 - you communicate your respect and concern for the person
- And while we all have our bad days
 - where the words we use
 - don't reflect a true picture of who we are
 - the words we chose to use as we communicate with those around us

- on a day in and day out basis
 - can have powerful and lasting effects
- Just think about how you would feel if
 - every morning you when you woke up
 - someone looked at you and said
 - “You are worthless and useless.”
 - It’s certainly not true
 - but if you hear it over and over again
 - eventually you’d start to believe it
- by contrast
 - how would you feel if every morning
 - you awoke to someone saying
 - “I love you. God loves you.
 - This is the day that the Lord has made.
 - Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
- In both cases
 - there really aren’t a lot of words spoken
 - but the lasting effect of each
 - is tremendous
- James wants our language
 - to reflect the love of Christ for us
 - and he marvels at the fact
 - that “from the same mouth come blessing and cursing.

- My brothers and sisters,” James says, “this ought not to be so.”

(James 3:10)

- For James

- and I think for us

- being a follower of Jesus means

- not only molding our actions to Christ’s example

- but allowing our words and our way of speaking

- to be molded by God’s love for us in Jesus

- Now - - -

- does that mean that you need to start and end every sentence with

“God loves you.” - - -

- No, it doesn’t,

- although starting five or six sentences a day

- with the phrase “God loves you” wouldn’t be a bad idea

- No, what I think James wants us to do

- is to be aware of the impact our words have in the world

- so that we might

- be intentional in making all of the words we use

- a part of our a witness

- to God’s love in Jesus - -

- whether we are specifically talking about God or not

- it takes a little work,

- but you can teach yourself to use words and phrase

- that you think reflect your faith
 - like for example
 - My parents always taught me that say “shut up”
 - was a mean and disrespectful way
 - to ask someone to please be quiet
- My parents never spoke those words to me
 - I don’t speak them to my children
 - and as a general rule they will say
 - “Please be quiet.”
- It may not seem like much - -
 - but, God treats us with love and respect
 - and so we treat others with love and respect in the way we speak to them
 - even in something as simple as asking for quiet
- I guess what I think James is trying to say
 - what I’m trying to say
 - is there is a language of faith
 - a language that involves not just big seminary words
 - but a language of love and respect
 - care and compassion
 - that expresses our faithfulness through our words
- And while I’m certainly not going to give you a list of words
 - with the instructions
 - use these words and don’t use those words

- I do hope that you will pick a day this week
 - and think about what you say and how you say it
- pick a day this week
 - and reflect on the way that your words express your faith
 - and see if there is one thing you can add to your vocabulary
 - or tone
 - that will help express God's love through your words
- for as my mother found out with the Red Velvet Cake recipe
 - one little word or phrase
 - really can make all the difference in the world.