

Good Morning, my name is Kelly Tibbitts. I'm the director of Kids Harbor. I'm excited to share a message with you today.

This summer we have looked at scripture that you, our community, have told us is meaningful to you.

Today we will look at a passage from the book of James.
I love book of James, I know that the words are true, but they are not easy...

James reminds us that we are made to Live Fully and Love deeply and Give freely. In this small book- I see Christ calling me, and calling all of us, to become loving followers of Jesus Christ.

So if you've been at Harbor this summer, you know that the series we are in is called God Breathed. I Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

It tells us that scripture is inspired, literally breathed, by God.

If you have a Bible we will be in James chapter 1...if you do not have one and would like one- they are in the back and it is our gift to you.

The book of James is found in the New Testament. If you have not read the book of James before I want to encourage you to read it. It might be a great book for you to read going into the fall, there's only 5 chapters. It is a quick book to read, but a hard book to do.

I found it almost ironic when we as a staff went through and planned out our summer and decided what verses we were each going to take to give a message from-that this verse in James is what I will be sharing today.

God really does use, as Jed shared last week, jars of clay- broken , cracked vessels- because I'm going to teach on a verse that says we are called to speak slowly.

James 1 :19

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. (NLT)

When I was growing up I would say the one thing that people found most difficult about me is the fact that I speak quickly. So as a child I got used to hearing people say "What did you say".

Recently I was sharing with one of my close friends that I was going to be preaching on this she said "Oh that is so funny, I don't know how many times you've come into

the Sunday School class to give us instruction and you would leave and we'd say to each other-What did she say".

So speaking slowly is not something that comes naturally to me.

But, I don't think this verse has much to do with being someone who is able to speak at a slow pace.

I think what James wants us to understand is that ***how we talk, and listen and deal with our feelings matters***. This is something that God has poured into my heart all summer.

I love to listen to a pastor in Georgia named Andy Stanley. When I have free time, in addition to listening to podcasts from Harbor, I listen to podcasts from him. I find him to be a strong leader and the way that he's able to communicate really speaks to me and stays with me.

So this summer I listened to his podcast series called "Christian" The point of this sermon series is that according to the Bible scripture followers of Christ were not called Christians by Jesus. He called His followers- disciples.

A Christian, according to our God Breathed Bible, is not definable. There is no definition ~in scripture ~of that word.

We can decide Christian means anything. What the followers of Christ called themselves was disciples and that in fact is very clearly defined.

Jesus defined it in John 13:35

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus said The people around us will know that we are my disciples by the way that we love.

Love is not about saying loving words, Love is seen when we act like Paul describes love in I Cor 13:4

Love is patient and kind....

It is not irritable or resentful ...it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

Kindness, gentleness, love is patient, it doesn't become easily angered, or keep records of wrong.

Love is a verb. In fact, it's been said that listening well is so closely connected to loving somebody that it is hard to tell the difference.

Let me say that again- listening and Loving are hard to tell apart.

And so, as we look at James 1- we see that we are called to speak slowly and to listen quickly.

Today, as we look at the book of James, I want to start with the question-who is James?

When we look at Matthew 13:55-56, we see that James is actually the brother of Jesus Christ.

We wouldn't know that just from the book of James.

If you look at James Chapter 1 verse 1 with me you see that he doesn't identify as many of us would if we had the opportunity to brag on ourselves.

James 1 NIV James, a Servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the letter that we now call the book of James was being written-James had become a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Jesus had given authority and leadership First to Peter.

The church began to be persecuted, Peter had to step out of Jerusalem due to the persecution, and James, the brother of Jesus rose up as a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

And yet, when he speaks of himself he doesn't say "I'm James, brother of Jesus-Leader of the church" Instead He **says "I am James, a servant"**.

And I think that's what God is looking for in all of us today, to understand that when Jesus came and led the disciples, he showed us how to lead others **through servant leadership**.

So James, the servant leader, writes a letter to the people that he cares for in Jerusalem. They are going through an incredibly difficult time. He is writing to inspire them, but he's also writing to remind them of what it is they were called to be as the church, as the **living example** of Jesus here on earth.

James chapter 1 begins by reminding us that persecution is going to come and when it does, we should consider it joy.

James says **look at pain**- whether it's someone who you thought of as a friend and now they're persecuting you, or maybe it's some trouble at work, maybe it's family, or maybe the church you love is changing. James says- **Consider it joy**

When you experience trials of any kind you can know that the testing of our faith produces, creates in us, things that we wouldn't have otherwise. Trials produce perseverance, the ability to go on and not give up. James 1

I have been a mom for 19 years and a teacher for over 25, and I am fascinated when I see studies on what is happening to the generation of children that are being raised today. We are raising children who don't understand how to try and try and try and fail and try again. But if we don't do that in life, we don't develop this gift of perseverance. Grittiness is important in becoming a healthy adult.

So James reminds this young church **trials are going to come -but don't give up.** And he continues to give advice that is inspired by God.

He tells his people what it looks like, to be a loving community, to be known as the Disciples of Christ... by how they love.

What does that look like?

Well, it looks like speaking slowly and listening quickly.

I want all of us to take a moment and think of someone in your own life who is a great listener...do you know anyone like that? Someone who loves well; they speak fewer words, rarely interrupt and are great at listening.

I have found as I have served in leadership in churches for over 13 years that most of the people I've worked with in leadership who have the gift of wisdom are often quiet.

When they speak, they are slow to speak...but they are full of wisdom.

I am writing this message first to remind myself of that fact, because as I said; not only do I speak quickly, I'm someone who speaks while I think.

Scripture tells us to speak slowly, to speak carefully and understand that our words really do matter.

There's that silly saying that stick and stones will break our bones but words will never hurt us.

We know that's not true. Words can get to a place in our soul that's often hard to dig out later, isn't that true? You might have a memory of a teacher who said something that wasn't true, but you still to this day believe it.

Maybe you were in junior high and someone said a word over you and it still stings. So that's why we are called to speak slowly. To speak words filled with grace and truth.

That is my heart and my passion. As a mom, it is exciting to see my girls grow up knowing ***that the words they speak should bring life.***

Our desire in Kids Harbor is that children learn that God knows and loves them and has a plan for them.

My desire, is that everyone who serves in KH knows that the most important thing they do is get to know who these children are, let them tell their stories.

A couple weeks ago I had the opportunity to go to the Global Leaders Summit that Bill Hybels, a Pastor from Willow Creek Church does every year. It's a chance to come and hear some really great leaders speak about things they know to be true and have worked for them.

One of the things Bill Hybels spoke on was our blind spots. So you might be sitting here today thinking "I am extremely good at speaking slowly and listening quickly" and it might actually be a blind spot in your life.

He mentioned that the best way to find out what your blind spots are is to ask the people you live with, work with and spend time with. Because just like in our car, our blinds spots are places we cannot see.

It usually takes me several weeks to prepare for a message in addition to the Kids Harbor things that I do, so I went to my girls this past month I asked my daughters "What do you think- have I've gotten better at listening" and one of them said "You're probably still not where you wish you were. Maybe a 5 out of a 10".

This is something that God has been working in my life for years and years, in fact decades and I'm still not there.

Even though I understand that someone who listens well is really able to reach the heart of the people they care about.
I need to grow and this is an area where I am still growing .

For me, I think one of my current struggles is the way technology is all around me. I'll have best intentions of just opening my computer to check e-mails, make sure no one needs anything and then- without planning to - I'll end up on Facebook. I try to listen and work...and I do not really listen.

I used to pride myself on my ability to multitask; I thought I could listen to all 3 girls, and do this thing and do that. I was hearing them, but I'm not listening.

Earlier I asked if there was anyone in your life that is an example of a great listener. You know, people who can look you in the eye while you're speaking and hear what you're saying.

That is what I am praying God will continue to shape me to be.

Scripture tells us that God has called us to be his disciples, to be the people that love well. So maybe today that's the piece that you'll take with you, is a prayer to be strong enough to ask the people around you, do I speak slowly, do I speak truth in kindness and do I speak life giving words into your life?

Do I listen quickly when you need me, am I present?

Do you see me looking, listening and responding and praying?

And the final part of the verse tells us that we are called to be slow to anger.

James 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

For some of you, maybe you're surprised the word is slow and that the verse does not say- don't be angry.

In her book "Emotionally Healthy woman", Geri Scazzero says that "anger is often a secondary feeling. It exists with sadness, hurt, fear. When we feel anger, a good question to ask ourselves is why?"

Jed has preached on this in the past, God is not against righteous anger...anger against the things that tear God's heart apart.

For my oldest daughter, God has put in her a righteous anger at the unjust way children and young girls around the world are abused and she wants to do something about that.

If she didn't have righteous anger against it, it wouldn't compel her to do what she needs to do.

But being slow to become angry is completely different.

How quickly do you become angry? What makes you angry?

I want to spend our next few minutes talking about expectations that lead to anger.

Geri Scazzero continues to say- that in order for us to have clear expectations- they need to be conscious. We need to be aware of what we think will happen. Unconscious expectations can lead to anger when they are not met. They need to be realistic, spoken and agreed upon. We can not expect other people to read our

minds. We need to speak clearly and respectfully. These are hard things to do- especially if we grew up without learning how to communicate in a healthy way.

But the good news- it that Scripture says IN OUR WEAKNESS HE IS STRONG.. CHRIST'S POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS.

If anger is an issue in your life- have you asked God to help you? Through prayer, confession and disciplines like being in a group that you can study truth with and pray with and be honest in...God can help you take steps to being someone who is slow to anger.

Finally, is our home a place where we are known as being slow to anger? I've shared with you before this was not the truth of my life when I was younger, I could become very angry very quickly it's something that God has worked on in my heart. I've taken little steps closer to him but it comes down in my opinion to one thing. It's what discipleship comes down to. It comes down to the word **love**. As we sit here today do we recognize that you we are loved by the creator of the universe, that he's a good father? And when you recognize that ...then your identity becomes ***I am the beloved child of God.***

We can sing with confidence-I'm loved by you God, that's who I am.

When I rest in that, then my identity can not be torn apart by things people say and do. At the same time, the people around me are not responsible for my identity. If my children behave, it does not make me a good mom. My identity is not found in them. And it has given them rest,

If we are created to be kind and loving, to do whatever it is that God has called us to do. We must believe that we are the loved children of the most high God. This is the core of who we are.

I don't know if we as followers of Christ have really taken seriously the call that we have as parents, to guard and guide the hearts of our children.

In the book of Ephesians chapter 6 it talks about the relationship between children and parents. If your mom or dad are still alive today, this is the call to you to its not just to younger children, we are called to honor our parents.

Children are called to honor. How? There's work involved, and that work is helping to understand what it looks like for children to honor their parents in a day and age where everyone in society mocks the parent.

If you watch any TV show, parents are dumb. They're just silly. They don't do anything right, and children are so much smarter and they just mock.

And in truth, there's a lot of things children will continue to be smarter than adults with. Technology just comes to them in a way that is shocking.

Most children in my toddler room, which means they are younger than age 3, can use an iPad and an iPhone. It is remarkable the way that their brains are adapting to the technology of today.

What is it like for your child to honor you?

If you have struggled with that as a parent, perhaps you also struggle with it as ***a child of your parent.***

I know I was shocked when God began to open this part of my life up and showed me I needed to do a better job of honoring my mom. So that's an encouragement to you today.

Have a conversation with what honor looks like to you. To me, it was when they were little younger we talked about things like eye rolling, what a dishonoring one of voice sounds like.

But then as a leader in your home, you need to look at the second part and what does that say?

(Verse Eph 6:2-4 The message)

Children, honor your parents. This is only right. "Honor your father and mother" is the first commandment that has a promise attached to it, namely, "so you will live well and have a long life."

Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.

Do not exasperate your children. Do not push them to a place where they feel unable to do what it is that you asked them to do. If your child is tired and hungry, asking them to go and behave is unfair.

And helping children become who Christ sees them to be is a lot of work, especially when you're tired.

That's often when children are most moldable, when they're sitting on their bed at the end of the day.

It is important to ask how are you, how is life for you, what can we pray about?

I've had years and years of stops and starts in discipling my own children. You can start with something as simple as bringing your children in close and praying a blessing over them.

Today- if God is nudging your heart to be slow to anger, what are some of the steps that you can do first..

Feel your feelings....are you sad today that our church will be different with The Mullenix family moving away...feel sad- it is ok.

Own your feelings- no one can make you angry- you choose to behave the way you behave. If you think need to change, start with how you think.

Finally – take a next step. Pray, Ask for God’s help, talk to someone you trust.

Finally-Find out how it is that you feel loved. Only loved people can love others...John 3:16 reminds us all how loved we are. God loves, sent His son for us, so we can believe and have eternal life.

When I went to the Global Leadership Summit this year, Bill Hybels had a strong message, He talked about how music connects our souls to heaven.

I encourage you to find a song that speaks truth in to your life. And play it over and over until you believe it.

In a few minutes we are singing a song that connected with me this Summer- It is “Good, Good Father”

When I heard that Jed was leaving I was feeling the same feelings many of you felt...I was sad, mad and fearful.

On a Sunday Night Ally Moran led worship at her home – and she sang this song- I had never heard it..

So I found the song on you tube and put it on my Facebook and then when I was at the GLS_15..Bill Hybels talked and shared how he uses music – his worship team began to sing the song that I had heard for the first time just days earlier. God is a good, good Father.

I was sitting with people I did not know very well – and I started crying, ugly crying and weeping- I was over whelmed by the love of God- He is a good Father and I am loved by Him- you are loved by Him.

When we know we are loved, we can respond in love

If you find yourself constantly responding in anger- it is time to look deep into your heart and bring the anger you have to the foot of the cross and ask God- where is this anger coming from?

Sometimes it righteous anger- something that is breaking the heart of God is breaking your heart... perhaps you are longing for God's justice to be with the poor and the marginalized and you realize He is calling you to be His hands and Feet

But if our anger is actually a secondary emotion and is covering up sadness or fear or rejection or a feeling of being left out...or maybe today you are tired or hungry and there are real physical needs that must be addressed...take a next step and deal with the actual issue.

God commands us to Rest, delight in God, find joy- that is what Sabbath is.

We can rest today knowing the Most High God-

He forgave us, ***while we were still sinners***- he died for us,

When you leave you might not remember any words I spoke, but I hope you will remember this.

That God is a good, good father and we are loved by him.

So, as we finish up our time here today we have seen that we are called to be disciples.

Disciples are people who follow Christ.

He clearly told us that we have should love one another.

We actually have a mandate to be known as people who speak slowly and are not aggressive or pushy, or defensive and angry.

And we're called to listen quickly ..to be able to sit beside someone and to hear them, to acknowledge God in them.

Whether or not there is something they bring to the table, their value as a person, the reason they are worth listening to, is because God himself created them in his image.

Everyone on this earth is created in the image of God.

So rather than being known as people who are for or against things; my hope is that we will become known as disciples, people who love really well.

People who speak slowly and listen quickly.

And finally recognize today that anger is not okay.
It's not a little sin, something that doesn't matter.

Some of us are stuffers and we squish things down for so long that we consider ourselves slow to anger but the fact is we are just afraid to acknowledge anger. Then it bubbles up and becomes too much and spews out.

Others of us acknowledge our anger the instant we feel it and have no problem with spewing it on the people around us.

But remember in 1 Corinthians 13 it describes very clearly what love looks like.

Love is patient and kind. It doesn't keep records of wrong.

We are called to gentle and to have self-control. This is only possible when the power of Holy Spirit in us. When we live as loved people.

Know that God made us, He loves us completely and fully and nothing we do causes him to love us more or less

We are completely and fully loved, redeemed. Our souls are bought and paid for by the blood of Christ.

So I want to pray for us as a community that we will delight in the God who made us , that our identity will be found in him- We will be the loved children of the Good Good Father

Will you pray with me?

Gracious Father-

We are thankful that are loved - that is who we are! Thank you for loving us.

And out of that love – God place in our hearts a desire to speak slowly, listen quickly

To be people who are committed to relationships, to caring for one another, to loving well

Finally –may we be known as a people who are slow to anger