

Impact of One: Tongues and Thumbs

You want to start a fire - just let your tongue loose.

That is James 3 in a nutshell

Just let all 4 inches of the muscle in your mouth run all over the place.

And in no time you will have a raging forest fire (James 3:5).

Well James could not have anticipated 2014.

The tongue is being given a run for its money.

Its 6,000 year reign of terror and injury is close to being toppled.

Something else is poised to step onto the podium of destruction.

James never envisioned thumbs doing the talking.

But that is what is happening today.

Researchers tell us that the digital generation sends 100 texts/day.

The digital generation is not just young people.

The digital generation is anyone plugged into the internet.

And there are a lot of thumbs out there totally out of control.

Those who use their thumbs don't use their tongues as much.

Their thumbs do the talking.

A thumb out of control is even more dangerous than a tongue.

You can smack a person from any distance with a thumb.

You can knock them down instantly with a facebook comment.

You can post comments read by hundreds, even thousands.

And that comment can be traced right back to your heart.

Perhaps that is why James says in verse 2 ...,

Parents I am sticking my nose into your business today.

If you have a child whose thumbs are out of control, you are responsible.

James makes that so clear.

"You know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness."

It is your responsibility to teach your children thumb control.

And if you don't or can't, you will be judged for the damage inflicted.

That judgment may or may not be in a court of law.

Your accountability will most certainly be with God Himself.

If God can hear words in any language, He can read words in any language.

Everything James says about the tongue is equally true about the thumb.

"And the [thumb] is a fire. The [thumb] is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. ... No human being can tame the [thumb] - a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same [thumb] come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so." (James 3:6, 8-10)

Our tongues and thumbs were made for so much more than this.

Our tongue and thumb were created to reflect the wisdom of God. (James 3:13, 17)

Imagine using your electronics like that!

Can you imagine the impact that your thumb would have dispensing God's wisdom?

Tweet something sweet like mercy and gentleness.

Text respect for purity and peace.

Use your facebook and blog to glorify God.

Stand up in the face of on-line evil and dispel it with good.

Colin Wilson shared this impactful insight.

"The mind has exactly the same power as the hands: not merely to grasp the world, but to change it." (Colin Wilson, born 1931; Novelist)

"It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." (Robert F. Kennedy 1925-1968; 64th US Attorney General)

How might Robert Kennedy say that today?

"It is from numberless diverse texts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man texts an ideal, or texts to improve the lot of others, or texts against injustice, he sends forth a tiny text of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those texts build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

(Robert F. Kennedy 1925-1968; 64th US Attorney General)

That is the positive impact of the thumb.

We see the negative impact of the thumb in verses 14-16.

That sounds like the work of the majority of today's thumbs.

Even our evil world puts down its electronics long enough to wring its hands.

"You've heard of Generation X. Now meet Generation Text. A Pew Research Center study says nearly one out of three kids between 12 and 17 years old send over 100 texts a day." - CBS Evening News

"The average teen sends 3,000 texts a month or one every 10 minutes or so."

EmpowHER

"Neuro-imaging has shown that back and forth texting floods the pleasure centers of the brain, the same area that lights up when using heroin." - Dr. Suzanne Phillips, PsychCentral

"More than 4 in 5 teens with cell phones sleep with the phone on or near the bed."

- PewInternet

"Research has found that some people suffer withdrawal symptoms if their phone doesn't ring, leading to 'lack of self esteem and anxiety'". - The Register (UK)

"It clearly fits the criteria of an addiction..." - Dr. Gary Small, psychiatrist
In *iBrain*, his latest book, Dr. Small urges digital natives - and plugged-in digital immigrants - to cultivate their one-on-one people skills by making a conscious effort to unplug themselves from the computer.

"I think that it's just like a drug, once you get hooked on to it, you can't let go. It's like whenever I open my eyes the first thing I look at is my phone."

Herman Vardanian, texter

"A study suggests that the high school students who spend the most time texting or on social networking Web sites (or both) are at risk for worrisome behaviors including smoking, risky sex, depression, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse and absenteeism." - New York Times

To thoughtlessly put a cell phone into someone's hands is to play with fire.

It isn't because of the electronics but because of the thumb.

Listen to one mother's lament.

At 13 she was bright, cheerful, considerate, and all I could ask for in a daughter. We had promised her that when she turned 13 she could have a cell phone - she had been hounding us for over a year but we didn't want her to grow up so fast. So on her 13th birthday, she got her phone. Within the next 24 hours, life began to change. Over the next month, the "changes" were noticeable:

- She didn't talk to us much any more... she didn't talk much at all. All she did was type on her phone
- Her life got a lot more "dramatic." Things like gossip and rumors are always there, but the phone seemed to magnify them by at least 10 times
- She seemed to have a bad attitude toward us all the time
- Rude behavior, like using the phone at dinner or other inappropriate times, became the norm

- We would get upset and try to make her stop, but that always made things worse.

This started a pattern that lasted just over 2 years. Then I overheard some of the kids at her school talking about "sexting." This sent chills down my spine. Many teens actually take nude photos of themselves and send them to friends - or they send them out to one friend who they think they can "trust" - only to find out that the photos are all over their school, or even worse, the internet!

This mother is Linda Montgomery but maybe your home sounds like hers.

She has a website www.teentextaddict.com that offers help with text addiction.

Her help costs a little but I purchased the ebook and read it this week.

It helped me understand text language like P911, 459, 1174, KPC, PAW.

You are probably spending more for one month of service than her book costs.

If you are struggling with these symptoms find help.

Parents, you need to monitor your child's texting.

If their log shows 100 texts/day, your child is probably addicted.

Addictive behavior always moves to new depths and craves new highs.

Just texting "having a bad hair day" won't satisfy.

It will need to be about someone else's hair, maybe even Mom's.

"Last fall, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy surveyed teens and young adults about sexting The results revealed that 39 percent of teens are sending or posting sexually suggestive messages, and 48 percent reported receiving such messages." - MSNBC

Thumbs that are used for sexting.

Thumbs that snap nude self photos and send to friends.

Thumbs that extend erotic and suggestive messages.

Thumbs that make you easy sexually.

Or thumbs that make someone else appear sexually active.

That is not God's wisdom.

That is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.

That activity reveals addictive behavior.

Here are a few pointers about setting boundaries for a text obsessed teen.

- Set clear guidelines as to what content you will allow to be sent.
- Help your teen understand the ramifications of this technology.
- Let your teen know that you will be checking their cell phone at any time, even if they pay their own bill.
- Set guidelines as to when texting can be done.
- Make sure that your teen knows the consequences for violating your rules.
- Educate them that even passing on a sexting message or picture can be traced back to them and result in criminal charges.

But most importantly, speak to them about the condition of their heart.

Only Jesus can extinguish the fire of the tongue and the thumb.

Only Jesus can flood a heart with love and empathy.

And He can use your tongue and thumbs to create a harvest of righteousness.

You can be the bit in the hands of your child that guides.

You can be the rudder your pilot, Jesus, uses to guide your child.

"The harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Will the tongue be toppled from its podium?

Thumbs might do just that.

But let's pray that Jesus does the toppling of both.

Invite Jesus to rule the heart and mind that controls the tongue and thumb.

Closing song - Agnus Dei