

Leader Guide

Words Matter

Winter 2026 | Week 1

Message Date 1/11/2026

THE GOAL

Welcome to the Winter Quarter. It's always amazing how fast the holidays fly by. This week we want to examine the connection between our hearts, words, and actions. Jesus teaches that what flows out of us—especially our words—is a direct reflection of what we treasure in our hearts. The goal is not behavior modification, but heart transformation. As a group, we want to honestly assess what our words and works reveal and consider how God may be inviting us to make healthier, God-honoring deposits into the treasury of our hearts.

MY STORY

- 1) Growing up, what is a phrase or saying you used often?
- 2) If you had to give up texting or talking on the phone for a week, which would you choose—and why?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

Matthew 12:33–37 (CSB)

³³ “Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ “Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. ³⁵ “A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. ³⁶ “I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. ³⁷ “For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

- 4) Why does Jesus connect fruit to the nature of the tree rather than focusing on behavior alone?

Jesus is showing that actions and words don't exist in isolation—they come from somewhere. The issue isn't just bad fruit; it's unhealthy roots. Real change happens when God transforms the heart. It's about close connection to the source and life transformation.

- 5) How do words function as a “tell” according to Jesus’ teaching?

Words reveal what is actually happening in our hearts. They expose what we treasure, trust, and rely on—often before we even realize it ourselves.

- 6) What does it mean that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”?

Our words are overflow, not accidents. Whatever consistently fills our heart will eventually come out through our speech.

- 7) How does the ROOT and FRUIT illustration help us assess our actions more honestly?

It shifts the focus from blaming circumstances to examining the heart. Our actions reveal what we are anchored to and who is ruling our heart.

- 8) What happens when the “fountain” of the heart becomes contaminated?

When unhealthy influences fill the heart, the words that flow out become damaging rather than life-giving.

- 9) What kinds of things are commonly deposited into the treasury of our hearts today?

Culture, comparison, fear, media, and self-promotion often shape us more than we realize if we're not intentional.

- 10) In your own life, how have you seen words act as a “tell” about what was really going on in your heart?

(Justin) One of the things I've always struggled with is anger. What I know is that anger is a secondary emotion usually for me it reveals insecurity, fear, or an unrealistic expectation of the world around me. Meaning, I want it to be a certain way and it's not the way I want so it's my will getting in the way of reality.

- 11) What are some things we can do this week to deposit more Jesus into our heart and less junk?

I think the first thing you can do is make sure we're getting in the word. Having dedicated time sitting with Jesus, allowing Him to transform us and then having regular time of integrated time where I'm spending conversations throughout my day with Him. I think another thing I can do is pay attention to what else I'm ingesting into my soul. Is it trash TV? Is the music I'm listening to, conversations I'm having, and people and friendships that I'm cultivating good for me?

CHAIR TIME TOOLS

Reflection Questions for Chair Time: think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) Ask God to reveal anything in your heart that may be producing unhealthy words or actions.
- 2) What is one step you can take this week to make healthier, God-honoring deposits into your heart?
- 3) What do you need to stop doing, start doing, or trust God for this week?