

James 3: 1-12
Taming the Tongue

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Context

- 1. The great responsibility we have as teachers (vs. 3:1-2)**
- 2. The power of the tongue (vs. 2-5a)**
- 3. The tongue's potential for evil (vs. 5b-6)**
- 4. The tongue's untamable nature (vs. 7-8)**
- 5. The tongue's inconsistencies (vs. 9-12)**

Put your Mind in Gear Before You Put your Mouth in Motion!

James 1:19

19 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, **slow to speak** and slow to anger;

James 1:26

26 If **anyone** thinks himself to be **religious**, and yet **does not bridle his tongue** but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless.

James 2:12

12 So **speak** and so **act** as those **who are to be judged by the law of liberty**.

James 3:5-6

5 So also the **tongue** is a **small part of the body**, and yet it **boasts of great things**. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

6 And the **tongue** is a **fire**, the very world of iniquity; the **tongue** is set among our members as that which **defiles the entire body**, and **sets on fire the course of our life**, and is **set on fire by hell**.

Put your Mind in Gear Before You Put your Mouth in Motion!

James 3:8

8 But no one can tame the **tongue**; *it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*

James 4:11

11 **Do not speak** against one another, brethren. **He who speaks** against a brother or judges his brother, **speaks** against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*.

James 5:12

12 But above all, my brethren, **do not swear**, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your **yes is to be yes**, and **your no, no**, so that you may not fall under judgment.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

James 3:1

1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Since teachers use their tongues more (to instruct others), they will be judged more strictly.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1. Take your role seriously.
2. A lot of responsibility comes with being a teacher because you are imparting God's Word.
3. Your words can have a significant influence on others and can alter the course of their lives.
4. A teacher should also be extra careful what he says so that he doesn't misguide people.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1. A teacher's responsibility

Matt. 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1. A teacher's responsibility

Acts 8: 1-4

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 *Some* devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.

3 But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1. A teacher's responsibility

Eph. 4:11-12

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

Heb. 5:12

12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1a. Do not become teachers for the wrong motivation.

1. Teachers are admired and respected.

a. This attention can lead to pride.

b. It can also attract people who enjoy being in the limelight.

1. Why is James encouraging fewer people to set their hearts on teaching?

1a. Do not become teachers without being prepared.

1 Tim. 1:6-7

6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,

7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.

2 Tim. 2:2

2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2. Explain the phrase, “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well” found in verse 2.

James 3:2

2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

1. Perfect means mature and shows that the spiritually mature can tame the tongue. However, we all stumble.
2. If a person is able to control his tongue completely, it is a sign of total self-control, and that person can control the rest of his body as well.
3. Taming the tongue is very difficult and we need God’s help.

2. Explain the phrase, “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well” found in verse 2.

4. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue”.

Pro. 18:21

21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

3. What examples from nature does James' share with us concerning the power of the tongue?

2. The power of the tongue

James 3:3-5a

3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths **so that they will obey us**, we direct their entire body as well.

4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder **wherever the inclination of the pilot desires**.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things....

4. How does our tongue set the course of our life on fire?

3. The tongue's potential for evil

James 3:5b-6

5 ...See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.

4. How does our tongue set the course of our life on fire?

3. The tongue's potential for evil

1. Sin against God

Psalms 10:3

3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord.

2. Sin against others

Pro. 16:27

27 A worthless man digs up evil, While his words are like scorching fire.

4. How does our tongue set the course of our life on fire?

3. The tongue's potential for evil

3. Sin against ourselves

Eph. 4:29

29 Let no unwholesome **word** proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

4. How does our tongue set the course of our life on fire?

3. The tongue's potential for evil

Words, once spoken, cannot be unsaid.

Words can hurt and may cause someone to leave God.

Words can rip apart relationships, cause depression, and start wars.

Words can also extend far beyond what you expect and impact others, even in faraway places.

The root of the problem is our sinful heart.

4. How does our tongue set the course of our life on fire?

3. The tongue's potential for evil

An example of words spreading like wildfire is the crucifixion of Jesus, as many of the same people that shouted “Hosanna” days earlier shouted “Crucify Him” because of the poisonous whispers of the Pharisees.

5. Why is the tongue so difficult to tame?

4. The tongue's untamable nature

James 3:7-8

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

8 But no one can tame the tongue; *it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.*20

5. Why is the tongue so difficult to tame?

4. The tongue's untamable nature

1. James uses another example from nature, this time about wild beasts.

a. His point is that although man can control and tame wild beasts, we cannot, of our own power, control the tongue.

5. Why is the tongue so difficult to tame?

4. The tongue's untamable nature

2. No man can tame the tongue. We are sinful and depraved.

a. Without God's help, we cannot hope to have victory or self-control in this area.

b. Our hope is in Christ. He gives us the strength to have victory.

5. Why is the tongue so difficult to tame?

4. The tongue's untamable nature

1 Cor. 10:13

13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful**, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but **with the temptation will provide the way of escape** also, so that you will be **able to endure it**.

6. What do verses 9 and 10 tell us about our speech?

5. The tongue's inconsistencies

James 3:9-10

9 With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

10 from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

6. What do verses 9 and 10 tell us about our speech?

5. The tongue's inconsistencies

With our tongues we bless the Lord, but then we curse people who were made in the very image and likeness of God.

We are not fully dependent and loyal to Jesus.

We have not surrendered our tongue to Jesus.

We have not decided to bridle our tongues.

We just speak our minds.

We cannot be God-focused and have a critical, filthy, or impure tongue.

6. What do verses 9 and 10 tell us about our speech?

5. The tongue's inconsistencies

James 3:11-12

11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter water?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can salt water produce fresh.*

6. What do verses 9 and 10 tell us about our speech?

5. The tongue's inconsistencies

1. Christians that practice saving faith are able to control their tongues.
2. The tongue can only be tamed with God's help. Christians need a renewed heart to change the tongue.
3. Be aware of your inconsistent tongue. Do not be lax in controlling the tongue.
4. Realize the damage your tongue can cause.

7. What are some ways you have hurt people with your speech?

- 1. Participating and telling off-colored jokes.**
- 2. Using stereotypes to describe people.**
- 3. Putting people down because of their beliefs, differences and appearances.**