

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 6 - *JAMES 3:1-12*

LEADER NOTES

As Christ followers, Jesus is Lord over every area of our lives, and this includes our words. Because we have been saved by Jesus, our words should reflect our new nature in Christ. We must understand that our words are powerful and revealing. What we say has the ability to tear down or to build up, bring life or bring pain. How we speak and what we say reflects the condition of our hearts.

Please continue to complete the Gospel Connection's and Conversations form. You can find the form [HERE](#).

You can find other sermons from our Teaching Pastor's [HERE](#).

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

THE WORDS OF YOUR MOUTH REVEAL THE CONDITION OF YOUR HEART.

James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,[c] these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 3:1-12.

STUDY NOTES

In this passage, James reveals the destructive nature of a seemingly small part of our lives. This small part, however, can produce ruin and may represent the presence of a vast system of iniquity within our body. Within this body the tongue can produce three results. First, it can corrupt the whole person. It is a source of pollution and defilement for the entire personality. Second, it sets the whole course of life on fire. Course may also mean "wheel." Life may refer to "birth," "origin," or "existence." A misused tongue may affect the cycle of life from birth onward! Third, the tongue is itself set on fire by hell. This describes Satan's influence on the tongue.

Your Words are Powerful

Without thinking for very long, you can probably come up with several examples of things you wish you hadn't said. Likewise, you can probably remember other times when someone has encouraged you and given you strength. Our words have the power to bless and to curse.

James used two analogies to emphasize the tongue's power to control. James said speech is like small bits in the mouths of large and powerful horses. A horse obeys the rider's commands because of the bit in the horse's mouth. With the bit attached to the bridle and the reins, the rider makes the horse obey. Controlling the mouths of horses controls their heads, which gives the rider power to guide the whole animal.

James also likened the control of speech to a small rudder that turns a large ship. Compared to the overall size of a ship, the rudder is small, yet has the power to steer the much larger vessel wherever the will of the pilot directs. Like the bit in the horse's mouth and the rudder on a great sea-going vessel, the tongue has great power to control the rest of the body.

Your Words are Revealing

Words have the power to give pleasure and delight to the one listening. Someone once said, "Words are the window into the soul." A wise old man said, "What's in the well comes up in the bucket." Words reveal what's in our hearts. The point of this section is what we hear from the Lord should change and shape the way we speak. If Jesus is Lord of all, He is Lord of our words. We are called to use our words in a way that gratifies and brings honor to Him. We are to encourage and correct one another with gentleness, love, and respect. The issue is we have no ability to control our own tongue.

Only when our tongue is mastered by the Holy Spirit, do our words become life-giving and delightful.

God shows us our responsibility to speak the truth in love, taking the gospel to our neighbors and the nations. When authentic faith is present, words are used to draw people to Christ.

If you need more resources for this week's sermon and curriculum, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *How have you personally felt the destructive power of words? When have you hurt someone with your words?*
- *How have you personally felt the power of words to bless? When have you blessed or comforted someone with your words?*
- *What type of speech do you struggle with most (gossip, judgmental, sarcastic, jealous, prideful, etc.)?*
- *How do your words reveal sin, fear, lack of faith, or other issues in your heart?*
- *How do you respond to the fact that you can't tame your tongue - does that make you feel helpless or does it free you up? Explain.*
- *How does submission to the Spirit help us control our words?*
- *Who can speak into blind spots within your speech?*