



May 10, 2026
Faith in Action - Taming the Tongue
James 3:1-12
Pastor Mike Griffin

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Questions for Personal or Small Group Use

Opening

When can you remember your tongue getting you in trouble? What happened? How much do you suffer from foot in-the-mouth disease now?

Discussion

- Why is James so hard on teachers? Why will teachers be judged more severely?
- James portrays the human tongue and the potential power of the words we speak? How does this portrayal serve as a warning for how we use our words?
- James uses some vivid imagery to explain why controlling our tongues is the key to maturity. How is a tongue like a horse's bit or a ship's rudder (3:2-5)?
- What is the point of comparing the tongue to a fire and to a world of evil (vs. 5-6)?
- In what ways can the tongue poison relationships?
- How do the analogies from nature (springs, trees, vines) highlight the inconsistencies of the tongue? What inconsistency do you see in the way you talk to others?
- How have you personally seen the tongues' impact and influence? How is it like fire?
- James has focused primarily on the destructive power of the tongue. In what ways can the tongue also bring refreshment and healing?
- What can you use your tongue to give God praise for?
- Why is it especially horrible to curse a human being?

Application

- What one insight from 3:1-12 would you like to apply?
- If you could improve your speech or control your tongue in one way what would it be? What will you do this week to begin to work on this?



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