

Taming the Tongue

Domar la lengua

Why must we tame the tongue?
¿Por qué debemos domar la lengua?

1. We will be judged by our _____.

Seremos juzgados por nuestras _____.

James 3:1-2 (Santiago 3:1-2)

Matthew 12:36-37 (Mateo 12:36-37)

1 Peter 3:9-10 (1 Pedro 3:9-10)

2. Our words have great _____.

Nuestras palabras tienen un gran _____.

James 3:5-6 (Santiago 3:5-6)

Mark 16:15-16 (Marcos 16:15-16)

Colossians 4:5-6 (Colosenses 4:5-6)

3. We were made in the image of _____.

Fuimos hechos a imagen de _____.

James 3:9-10 (Santiago 3:9-10)

Colossians 3:8-10 (Colosenses 3:8-10)

Ephesians 4:29-30 (Efesios 4:29-30)



Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 5: June 8-15

James 3:1-12

In James 3:1-12, we see why it is so important for us to think before we speak. James mentioned this briefly in the first chapter (1:19, 26). Throughout the Bible, God gives us many commands and warnings about our speech. God gives us these instructions because He loves us and wants our speech to be a blessing. While our words may seem like tiny sparks, they can quickly turn into raging wildfires. Our words have the potential to change the world for good or evil, and Satan knows this. He also knows that by our own power, we cannot tame the tongue (James 3:8). However, “all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27). When we pray and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can develop self-control and turn our speech into a blessing.

Read James 3:1-12

1. What warning does James give to those who want to be teachers? Why? (3:1)

Kent Hughes observes,

James’ motivation for his command “not many of you should presume to be teachers” is not that he wants to evacuate the church of gifted teachers, but rather that he wants people to assume such duties in the right spirit, under God’s tutelage. He wants those who teach to have control over their tongues because a chaste tongue means a pure heart and a life submitted to God. (Hughes, 121)

2. How does James compare the challenge of controlling our speech to other aspects of self-control? (3:2)
3. What is the purpose of a bit in the mouth of a horse? (3:3)
4. What is the purpose of the rudder of a ship? (3:4)
5. What similarity does a person’s tongue have to a horse’s bit, a ship’s rudder, and a spark of fire? (3:5)
6. What damage can a small spark cause to a great forest? (3:5)

Douglas Moo writes,

James does not elaborate the ways in which the destructive power of the tongue can make itself felt. But he undoubtedly would have thought of those sins of speech that are enumerated in Proverbs: thoughtless “chattering” (10:8; 12:18; 29:20); lying (12:19); arrogant boasting (18:12); gossiping (10:18). Think what enormous, sometimes irreversible, harm can be caused to people by unsubstantiated, often false, rumors. Such a rumor can be harder to stop than any forest fire. (Moo, 198)

7. How did James describe the tongue in verse 6?
8. If no human can tame the tongue, what hope do we have? (3:7-8)

Charles Swindoll notes,

James is talking about subduing our sinful speech by our own power. He says human beings, on their own, don’t have the ability to keep their tongues in check. But if you know Christ personally, God’s power through the Holy Spirit’s presence can transform your heart and take full control of the tongue. As Christ said regarding another impossibility—“With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). (Swindoll, 70)

9. Why is it inconsistent to praise the Lord and curse people? (3:9-10)

Gary Holloway writes,

Few Christians would admit hatred for others, but their speech betrays them. They sing God’s praises loud in church on Sunday then wound others, even those closest to them, with their words the rest of the week. Such inconsistency is unthinkable to James: “My brothers, this should not be.” (Holloway, 84)

10. What can a spring or a fruit tree teach us about speech? (3:11-12)
11. Why will God judge teachers more strictly than other people?
12. Why do you think James used so many images in this passage?

Hughes notes,

There are few sections of Scripture which are so graphically relentless in making a point. In addition, this is the most penetrating (and convicting) exposition of the tongue anywhere in literature, sacred or secular. One must also conclude that it was not just James' local concern for his churches which occasioned the writing, but also the Holy Spirit's desire that the church at large learn to control the tongue. (Hughes, 129)

13. Why do people often excuse their sinful talk as “not that bad”?

Holloway comments,

What is at stake here is not just watching our words but being controlled by God. “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34b). James is not pointing so much to self-improvement but to character. Whether or not we are teachers, the real question is, “Who controls our speech?” or rather, “Who controls our life?” (Holloway, 64)

14. How is our speech influenced by others around us?

15. What can we do to develop more self-control in the way we talk?

16. What are some ways we can use our words for good every day?

17. When was the last time someone encouraged with their words?

18. When was the last time you encouraged someone with your words?

19. How can you change your speech habits to make your words more pleasing to God?

20. What positive words do your family and coworkers need to hear from you this week?

Sources cited:

Holloway, Gary. *James & Jude*. College Press, 1996.

Hughes, R. Kent. *James: Faith that Works*. Crossway, 2015.

Moo, Douglas. *The Letter of James*. Eerdmans, 2000.

Swindoll, Charles. *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*. Tyndale, 2014.