



Practical Faith

A Study in the Book of James



Book of James

Practical Faith



Week	Section	Topic	Teacher
1: February 8 th	Intro & James 1:1-18	Testing of Your Faith	Ron Grebe
2: February 15 th	James 1:19-27	Hearing and Doing the Word	Adam Collins
3: February 22 nd	James 2:1-13	The Sin of Partiality	Mike Gann
4: March 1 st	James 2:14-26	Faith Without Works Is Dead	Ryan Snider
5: March 8 th	James 3:1-12	Taming the Tongue	Ron Grebe
6: March 15 th	James 3:13-18	Wisdom from Above	Mike Gann
7: March 22 nd	James 4:1-12	Warning Against Worldliness	Ron Grebe
8: March 29 th	James 4:13-17	Boasting About Tomorrow	Adam Collins
April 5 th	Easter		No Class
9: April 12 th	James 5:1-6	Warning to the Rich	Ron Grebe
10: April 19 th	James 5:7-12	Patience in Suffering	Adam Collins
11: April 26 th	James 5:13-20	The Prayer of Faith	Mike Gann

Style & Major Themes

- James is made up of short challenging, wisdom speeches:¹
 - Chapter 1 introduces key themes of the book
 - Chapter 2-5 Full of **metaphors** and easy to memorize one-liners

James uses 7 metaphors to describe the tongue in today's passage

Location	Theme	Revisited
James 1:2-4, 12	Trials of life	5:7-11
James 1:5-8	God gives wisdom	3:13-18
James 1:9-11	Wealth is fleeting (rich/poor)	2:1-7 and 5:1-6
James 1:16-18	God gives generously	4:13-17 and 5:7-8
James 1:19-25	Be doers of the word	2:14-26
James 1:26-27	Bridle your tongue	3:1-12, 4:11, and 5:12

Today is specifically about "Taming the Tongue"

¹<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-james>

Taming the Tongue (v 3:1-12)



Taming the Tongue

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

²For 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. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look 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. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.



Taming the Tongue (v 3:1-12)



How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And 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. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

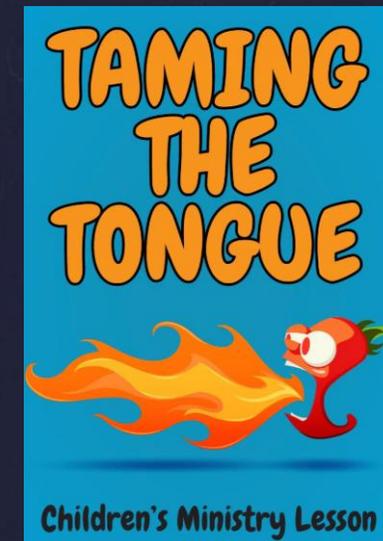
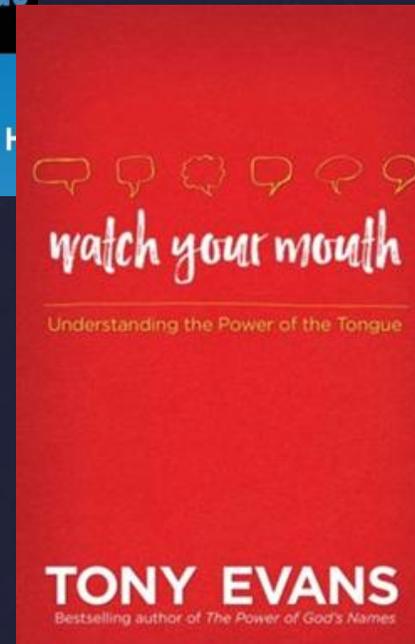
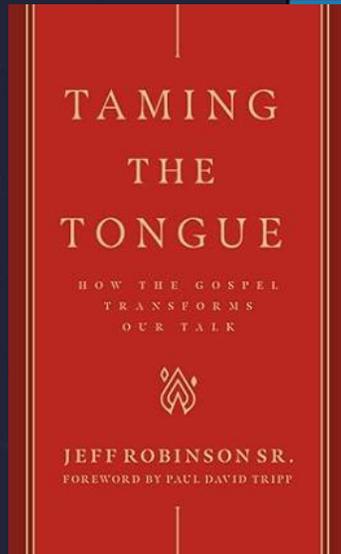
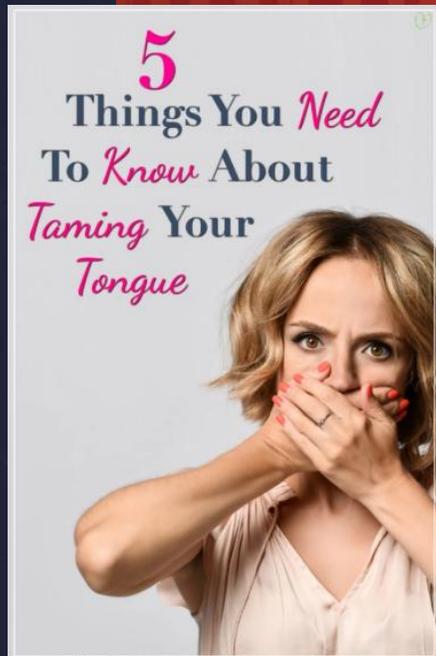
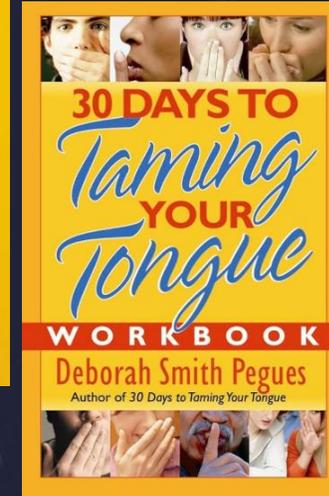
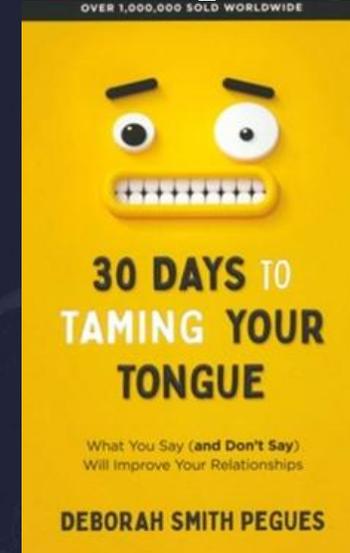
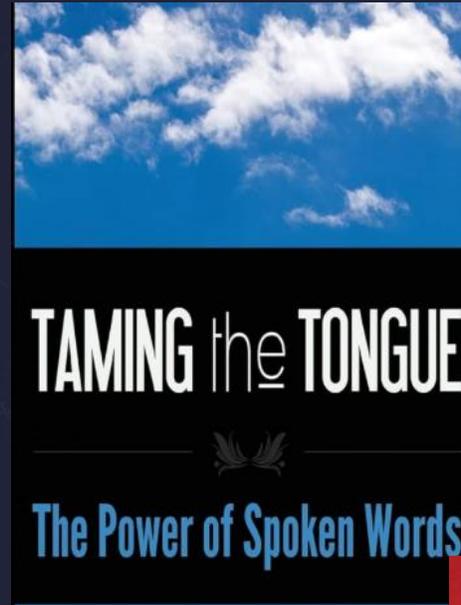
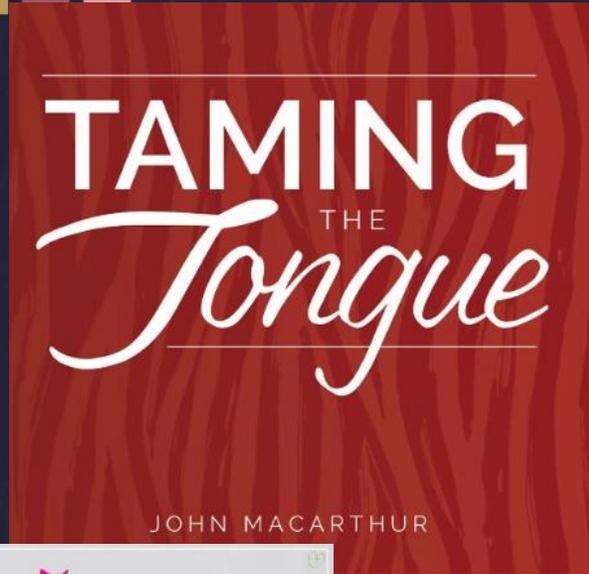




What comes to mind
when you think about
taming the tongue?



Taming The Tongue is a Popular Topic





Why is it significant that James talks about the tongue right after stating that faith without works is dead?



Descriptions of The Tongue

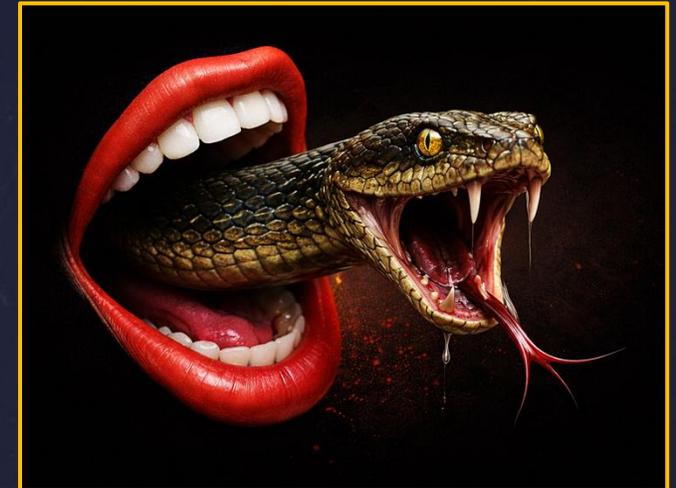


- The **tongue is a small member**, yet it boasts of great things (v 3:5)



- The **tongue is a fire**, a world of unrighteousness (v 3:6)

- It **is a restless evil**, full of deadly poison (v 3:8)



The Tongue in James



- James mentions the **tongue** in every chapter of his epistle:
 - *If anyone thinks he is religious and **does not bridle his tongue** but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless (1:26)*
 - ***So speak** and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty (2:12)*
 - ***And the tongue is a fire ... no human being can tame the tongue (3:6-8)***
 - ***Do not speak evil** against one another, brothers (4:11)*
 - *But above all, my brothers, **do not swear**, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, **but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no**, so that you may not fall under condemnation (5:12)*



It must be a pretty important topic.



**What does the tongue
reveal about us?**



Jesus on the Tongue

The tongue reveals the heart of a person

“³³Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” —

Matthew 12:33-37

Jesus on the Tongue



- It is more than a just a problem of the tongue:

“²⁰And he [Jesus] said, ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’”

– Mark 7:20-23

(see also Matthew 15:18-19)



Paul on the Tongue



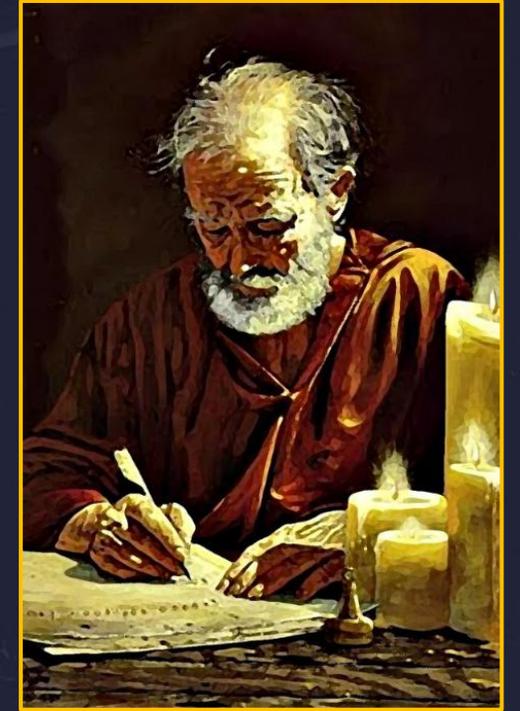
- Paul quotes Psalm 5, 10 and Psalm 140:

*“Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”*

“The venom of asps is under their lips.”

“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

– Romans 3:13-14



Proverbs on the Tongue



- Proverbs has **91** verses addressed to the tongue or lips:

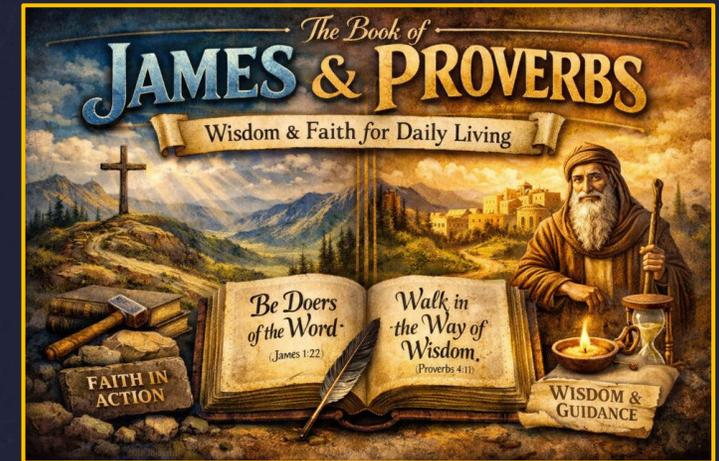
*“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” (10:11)*

*“When words are many, transgression is not lacking,
but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.” (10:19)*

*“An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,
but the righteous escapes from trouble.” (12:13)*

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (15:1)

*“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.” (17:27)*

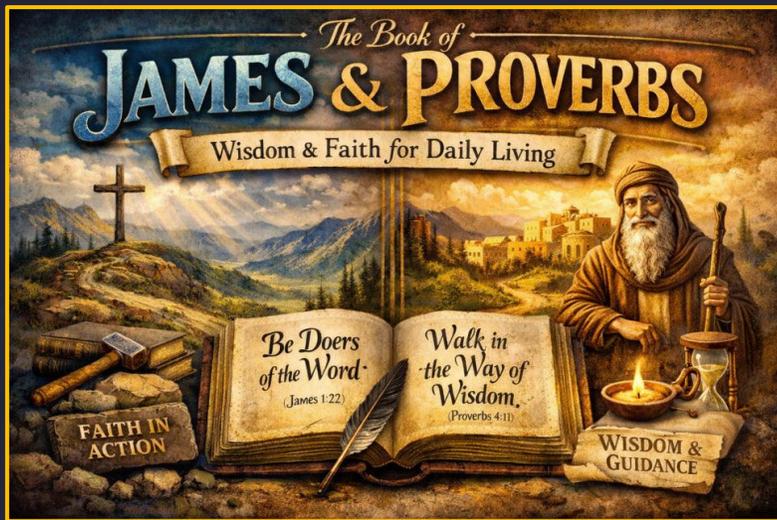


Proverbs on the Tongue



- Proverbs has **91** verses addressed to the tongue or lips:

*“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion.” (18:2)*



“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (18:21)

*“Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself out of trouble.” (21:23)*

*“A fool gives full vent to his spirit,
but a wise man quietly holds it back.” (29:11)*

*“Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.” (29:20)*



The Tongue



“The tongue is you in a unique way. It is a tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person. Not only that, but misuse of the tongue is perhaps the easiest way to sin.”¹

– John MacArthur





Teachers and the Tongue

James 3:1



Teachers (v 3:1)



didaskalos – master or teacher. Was often used of rabbis and anyone else who teaches or preaches.



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



megas – large or abundant.



krima – a negative judgment or decree. Not in terms of salvation but refers to the various levels of rewards each will receive (1 Cor 3:14-15).



Teachers (v 3:1)



“James begins this section by focusing on persons **who speak publicly the most** (i.e., teachers) and warns against hastiness in taking up the mantle of teacher since **it is so easy to err in speech** and thus incur God’s strict judgment.”¹

“**If teachers fall, they can take many people with them**; therefore, God will judge teachers of the Word according to the kind of impact they had on those they aspired to lead.”²



Jesus on Teachers



Traditions and Commandments

*“⁷So for the sake of your tradition **you have made void the word of God ...***

⁹teaching as doctrines the Commandments of men.” – Matthew 15:7, 9



Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees

*“²The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³**so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.** ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.” – Matthew 23:2-4*



Teachers (v 3:1)



- Warnings for anyone who teaches within the church:

“James has a sober admonition for those who would become teachers in the church. **They must take the responsibility seriously**, because their accountability is greater and they shall receive a stricter judgment.”¹

“The office is a noble one; but **few are fit for it**. **Few govern the tongue well (James 3:2), and only such as can govern it are fit for the office**; therefore, “teachers” ought not to be many.”²



¹https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/james/james-3.cfm?a=1149001

²Logos Bible Commentary on James 3:1



The Power of the Tongue

James 3:2-5a



The Power of the Tongue (v 3:2-5a)



ptaiō – make a mistake, void of offense.

²For 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.

teleios – full age or mature.

- Controlling our tongue is an indication that we have control over our self. **Whoever can control the tongue can bridle the whole body.**¹
- When a person's speech is Christ-exalting, God-honoring, and edifying, one can be sure the rest of his life is spiritually healthy.²



¹https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/james/james-3.cfm?a=1149001

²MacArthur, John, *New Testament Commentary on James*, page 153.

The Power of the Tongue (v 3:2-5a)



³If we put **bits** into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look 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.

A small bit controls a strong horse

Two great metaphors

A small rudder turns a large ship





Why do you think
James uses so many
metaphors throughout
his letter?



Seven Metaphors of the Tongue¹



- Metaphors create vivid, visual images and are far more memorable than plain facts, aiding in better retention of the message:

Location	Metaphor	Meaning
James 3:3	The Bit	Similar to how a small bit controls a large horse, controlling the tongue enables control over the whole body .
James 3:4	The Rudder	Just as a small rudder steers a massive ship, the tongue directs the course of a person's entire life .
James 3:6	Fire	The tongue is a "world of iniquity" and a small spark that sets a vast forest ablaze .
James 3:7-8	Wild Beast	While mankind can tame all kinds of beasts, no human can tame the tongue, which is a "restless evil" .
James 3:8	Poison	Poison harms and James is saying that our words have the power to harm people.
James 3:11	Water	James argues for consistency, stating that a spring cannot produce both fresh and bitter water, nor can a fig tree produce olives, highlighting the hypocrisy of using the same tongue to praise God and curse people.
James 3:12	Fruit Producing Plants	

¹<https://walkingintherealityofgod.wordpress.com/2015/11/09/how-metaphor-in-james-31-12-reveals-the-power-of-words/>

The Power of the Tongue (v 3:2-5a)



aucheō – to bear one's self loftily in speech or action.



⁵So also the ~~tongue~~ tongue is a small member, yet it **boasts** of great things

“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” – Proverbs 27:2

- James mentions **boasting** several times in his letter:
 - *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.* (3:14)
 - *As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.* (4:16)





Why do we have a
tendency to boast?



Boasting About Ourselves



AI Overview

Boasting is hard to stop because it serves as a subconscious mechanism **for seeking external validation**, managing deep-seated insecurities, and overcompensating for feelings of inadequacy. It is driven by a psychological **need to boost self-worth, feel superior, and curate a positive image**, often leading to a cycle where temporary pride necessitates more boasting. **Boasting often becomes a habitual way to manage, or mask, one's self-perception in social situations.**



Scripture on Boasting



- Scripture against boasting:

“And the king of Israel answered, ‘Tell him, ‘Let not him who straps on his armor boast himself as he who takes it off.’” – 1 Kings 20:11

“The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.” – Ps 5:5

“It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one’s own glory.” – Pr 25:27

“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” – Pr 27:1

“For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” – 1 Cor 4:7



“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant” – 1 Cor 13:4

Scripture on Boasting



- Scripture on good boasting:

“¹I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

²My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.”

– Psalm 34:1-2

“⁷But you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us.

⁸In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever.” – Psalm 44:7-8

“²³Thus says the Lord: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, ²⁴but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.’” – Jeremiah 9:23-24



Scripture on Boasting



- Scripture on good boasting:

“²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong ... ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God ... ³¹so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” – 1 Cor 1:27-31

“¹³But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. ¹⁷‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” – 2 Cor 10:13, 17

“³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.” – 2 Cor 10:30

“¹⁴But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus  Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” – Gal 6:14



Someone once said:

Humility. We admire it in others,
yet we all struggle to live it out in
our own lives.





The Difficulty of Taming the Tongue

James 3:5b-12



Taming The Tongue (v 3:5b-12)



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



⁶And **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. ⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

adikia – specifically, unrighteousness by which others are deceived.



Taming The Tongue (v 3:5b-12)



No person can tame the tongue and gain mastery over his speech in his own strength or by mere willpower.¹



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

⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come

both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. ¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

Never stops – we are prone to gossip, criticize, and complain.

ios – translated as venom in Romans 3:13 but as corroded in James 5:3.



¹<https://www.gotquestions.org/no-one-can-tame-the-tongue.html>

Taming The Tongue (v 3:5b-12)



- James highlights the **inconsistency** of the tongue:
 - It can be used both to praise God and to curse people made in God's image:

"⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; ¹⁰from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way."

A mild appeal, leaving it to themselves to understand that such conduct deserves the most severe condemnation¹

- **"This duality is troubling and reveals the inner conflict within us. As believers, we are called to use our speech to build others up and to glorify God (Ephesians 4:29). However, the sinful nature often leads us to speak words that are harmful, deceitful, or unkind."**²



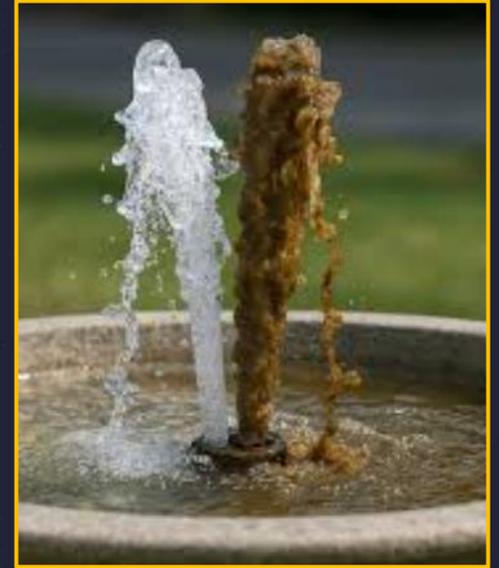
¹Logos Bible Commentary on James 3:10

²<https://learn.openchristian.education/blog/sangwa/taming-the-tongue>

Taming The Tongue (v 3:5b-12)



¹¹Does a fountain send out from the same opening both **fresh and bitter water**? ¹²Can a **fig tree**, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.



A fig tree that produces olives does not exist in nature – they are two distinct species.

1st Century metaphors that are difficult for us to understand

Relevant, since salt and bitter springs are found in Palestine. Though “sweet” springs are sometimes found near, yet “sweet and bitter” (water) do not flow “at the same place.”





Why is taming the
tongue so difficult?



Taming the Tongue



*“But no one, that is, **no human being in his own power can tame the tongue.** Even in believers the tongue can easily slip out of its sanctified cage, as it were, and do great harm.”¹*

– John MacArthur



Taming The Tongue (v 3:5b-12)



- Common solution to controlling the tongue:

*James isn't telling us to never speak or to take a **vow of silence**; in many ways that would be easier than exercising true self-control over the*



*tongue. **The bridle, the rudder, and the fire can all do tremendous good when they are controlled properly.**¹*



¹https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/james/james-3.cfm?a=1149001

Taming The Tongue



“I never learned anything from talking. I only learned when I was listening.”

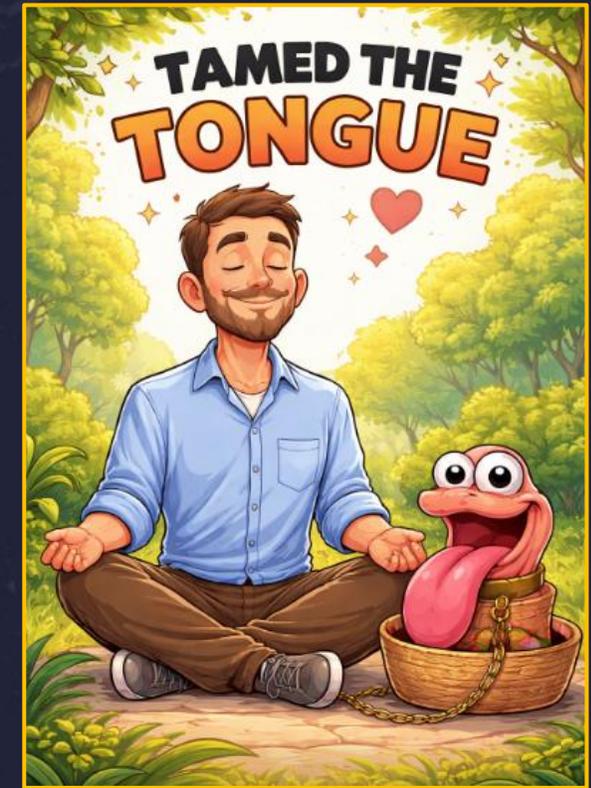
- John D. Rockefeller



Summary & Practical Steps



1. While many people have quit smoking or drinking by the power of the human will, **the problem of the heart and tongue cannot be solved by human will power:**
 - It takes the power of the resurrected Christ within us to control the tongue, and that power is available only to those who turn their lives over to Him (Romans 8:10–14). As with so many things in life, *“with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”* (Matt 19:26).¹



2. Remember that God will hold us **accountable** for the words we speak:
 - James' advice *“let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”* (1:19)



¹<https://www.gotquestions.org/taming-the-tongue.html>

Summary & Practical Steps



3. To keep our tongues under control, we can start every day with the prayer of David:¹
 - *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.” – Psalm 19:14*

4. Prayer is essential in seeking help to tame the tongue. David’s prayer in Psalm 141:3:¹
 - *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”*

5. **Memorize scripture** on the power of our words or the tongue.



¹<https://www.gotquestions.org/the-tongue-is-a-fire.html>

Summary & Practical Steps



- Scripture on taming the tongue:

*“A **soft answer** turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” – Pr 15:1*

*“**Gracious words** are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”
– Pr 16:24*

*“The **right word at the right time** is like precious gold set in silver” – Pr 25:11*

*“My lips will **not speak falsehood**, and my tongue will not utter deceit.” – Job 27:4*

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, **but have not love**, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” – 1 Cor 13:1*

*“**Let no corrupting talk** come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” – Eph 4:29*

Summary & Practical Steps



- Scripture on taming the tongue:

*“Let there be **no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking**, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” – Ephesians 5:4*

*“⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, **slander, and obscene talk** from your mouth.” – Colossians 3:5-8*

*“Let **your speech always be gracious**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” – Colossians 4:6*

*“¹Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, **to be ready for every good work**, ²**to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling**, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” – Titus 3:1-2*



Practical Faith

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