

Fleshed Out: A Journey Through the New Testament Letter of James

“How to Tame Your Tongue”

Discuss

Words can have a great impact on us as well as those around us. We look back on a great speech as a source of motivation, or how an encouraging word from a close friend can be just the thing we need to accomplish things that we never thought possible. On the other hand, a negative comment from someone can destroy our confidence, or a hurtful remark from a parent can leave a child searching for acceptance from anyone who will listen. Words are powerful. James wants to tell us how we can best use them.

“Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.” ([James 3:2 NLT](#))

- Has there ever been a time that you were able to speak life into someone? Were you able to encourage them to see themselves in a more positive light?
- How are you at controlling what you say to others? Do you ever hear words come out of your mouth that you wish you could take back?
- How are you at communicating with yourself? Does your inner dialogue lead you to act more Godly?

James knows that it is easy for us to see our words as insignificant. But the truth is we can begin to fall into patterns with our words that are either life-giving or life-taking. We can make a habit of talking to others, and talking to ourselves in a positive or negative way without even noticing it. Sinful habits of gossip, slander and negativity seem to come naturally to us. Building Godly habits of encouraging people and speaking life into them takes a degree of intentionality. This is the reason James makes such a big deal about paying attention to our words.

“A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it!” ([James 3:3-5, MSG](#))

- Are there any Godly habits that you have formed when it comes to your words? Is there someone that you admire because of the way they use their words to uplift others?
- Are there any sinful habits with your words that you have developed? What can you do to make sure the words you use are pure, positive, powerful, and God-honoring?
- Jesus used His words to challenge, motivate, encourage and cast a clear vision for the life He desires for us to live. He desires that we do the same. Name one person's life that you could change with your words this week.

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Everything that comes to our mind does not need to come out of our mouth. It is helpful to put the words we want to say through a few “Godly” filters:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it helpful?
3. Am I speaking to the correct person?
4. Is it loving?

If our speech does not make it through these four filters, maybe it would be best if we don't say anything at all. Consistently speaking in a God-honoring way takes practice. It is not something that just changes overnight. Let's commit to using our words in a way that is loving to the people that God created.

“This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth!

“My friends, this can't go on. A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and brackish the next, does it? Apple trees don't bear strawberries, do they? Raspberry bushes don't bear apples, do they? You're not going to dip into a polluted mud hole and get a cup of clear, cool water, are you?” ([James 3:7-12, MSG](#))

- Does taking our words through these filters seem like too much work or totally worth it? How will you remember to use these filters daily?
- Does how you talk about people reflect how you talk about or to God? What can you do to bring this into better alignment?
- Why is it so important that Christians speak to the world in a way that is loving?

Next Steps

The call on our lives is to love God and love people. While people's actions may not always align with God, our love for His creation should remain the same. Let's commit to loving people the way that God loves them. That is a love that does not depend on what they do, but who they are. A person made in the image of the living God.

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August 11: [The Grounds Online Book Club: A Voice in the Wind](#)

August 11: [REALIFE Roller Skate Night](#)

August 13: [MAXlife All Nighter](#)

August 14: [Crisis Assistance Serve Day](#)

August 15: [Backpack Drive](#)

Daily: [Training Camp](#)

Continued Reading

Read: [Ephesians 4:29-32](#)

Prayer

God, it is so tough to control what comes out of my mouth. I know it begins with what I allow to go in my head. I pray that I am able to put more of your Word in my head so that more of your love comes out of my mouth. Please guide my words as I talk to other people. I pray that everything that comes out of my mouth is honoring you. Amen.