

## **Step-by-Step: Practical Living from the Book of James**

### **Take the Step of Speech**

James 3:1-12

#### **Main Idea: Our words have great power, for good or evil.**

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 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. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 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. 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! 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. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.” **James 3:1-12**

#### **Three Ways Our Words Have Power:**

##### **I. Power to Direct**

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 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. 5a So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.” **James 3:1-5a**

“...let every person be quick to hear, *slow to speak*, slow to anger” **James 1:19**

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

##### **II. Power to Destroy**

“How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 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. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” **James 3:5b-8**

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak” **Matthew 12:36**

“There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” **Proverbs 12:18**

“...I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence.” **Psalms 39:1**

“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!” **Psalms 141:3**

##### **III. Power to Refresh**

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.” **James 3:9-12**

The ability to communicate is an incredible blessing! And it is a **God given gift!** We are made to worship God with our mouths and tell others about the good things that He has done and continues to do.

**If you are a follower of Jesus than this challenge is not a call to silence, but to purpose and consistency:**

- **Build Others Up with Life-Giving Words:**

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” **Proverbs 18:21**

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

- **Speak the Message of Salvation:**

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” **Romans 10:13-17**

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” **Luke 6:45**

#### **Sources & Further Reading Opportunities:**

- *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* – Elwell & Comfort (2001)
- *New American Commentary: James* – Kurt Richardson (1996)
- *Shoe Leather Christianity* – Johnny M. Hunt (2014)
- *Holman NT Commentary: Hebrews & James* – Max Anders (1999)
- *The Book of James* – Johnny M Hunt (2003)
- *James: Faith that Works* – R. Kent Hughes (2013)
- *Exploring the Epistle of James* – John Phillips (2003)
- *Be Mature* – Warren Wiersbe (2010)
- *Swindoll’s Living Insights: James, 1&2 Peter* – Chuck Swindoll (2014)
- *MacArthur’s NT Commentary: James* – John MacArthur (1998)