

FAITH + WORKS

JAMES 3:1-12



OPENING

- Read the passage (James 3:1-12) together, and ask the group members to respond to the text by explaining whether it challenges them, encourages them, or both.

SERMON REVIEW

- James 1:26 made this clear: “religious” people that do not control their tongues are practicing a worthless religion.
- The tongue is like a rudder that moves a boat, directing the course of one's life. It's like a raging, unquenchable fire if not properly contained. One of the hardest things God will ever ask us to do is control one of the smallest parts of ourselves.
- The tongue must be tamed, because our words carry weight; in it are the power of life and death (Proverbs 18:21). But how do we tame it?
- *Guard your heart and your mind.* What you put inside will eventually come out; the mouth speaks what the heart is full of (Matthew 12:34). So your words put a spotlight on your own soul (Proverbs 20:27). Above all else, guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23), because what you allow into them will directly affect your behavior.
- *Know when to speak-up, and when to shut-up.* There is a time to speak, and a time to stay silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent (Proverbs 17:28). Just because you *can* say something doesn't mean you *should*. Be slow to speak and quick to listen! Don't know what to say? That's when you should shut-up. Guard your voice, so that it matters when you use it.
- *Choose to speak life.* Scripture doesn't say that words are good or bad, but that they're deadly or invigorating (Proverbs 18:21). So we need to speak life to ourselves (Philippians 4:6) and to others (Proverbs 12:8). And that doesn't just mean we should stop tearing people down, but that we should intentionally build them up!
- How you choose to think about a person or situation, and what you say, will determine the way you act (Proverbs 23:7).

DISCUSSION

- What's the relationship between this teaching and the earlier discussion of being “slow to speak” and “quick to listen” (James 1:19, 26)?
- Do the images (bit, boat, spark, stream) emphasize the severity of the situation? How?
- How do the heart and tongue operate in conjunction with one another?

- What does it mean to guard one's heart? And what are some practical ways to keep it secure, or safe-guarded?
- Which of the proverbs that John mentioned do you find to be the most moving? Why?
- Have you ever witnessed words giving life or bringing death? Tell the story.
- James seems to suggest that no man has ever completely tamed the tongue. Why is it so hard to control?
- Why is it so important to speak life over the people and circumstances that surround us? How did Jesus demonstrate that kind of behavior, and its impact, during his ministry?

CHALLENGE

- Speak life into your relationships and circumstances. Edify *everyone* around you!
- Evaluate the way you speak and determine where more control is needed.
- Continue reading, writing, and memorizing the book of James.

PLAN AHEAD

- Read the rest of James before Sunday! It will give you an idea of how the letter concludes, and where we'll be going in the sermon series over the next few weeks.