

**The Taming of the Tongue – James 3:1-12**

On average how many words do you think a man speaks per day?

How many words on average do you think a woman speaks per day?

Men speak an average of 7,000 words a day.

Women speak an average of 20,000 a day.

Whether you speak a lot, or you speak little the reality is this: **Our words can be powerful.** There is an old saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” I’m not so sure how true this statement is, because words can hurt, and wound, and cut deep. But words can also heal, affirm, encourage, and give hope.

*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.* Proverbs 18:21

** *Helpful Notes:*** According to Proverbs 18:21, one should take care to watch his or her words carefully and be slow to speak. There is life and death in words. If you love to talk, you will eat the fruit of your words. Perhaps you know the phrase, “He will be eating his words.” Our words can condemn us.

If you have a habit of losing control of your tongue, whether it is to curse, gossip, brag, lie, or anything else unseemly, ask the Lord to help you be silent. You will eat the fruit of your tongue, bitter or sweet.

In our study today James is going to tell us that real faith is shown by how we speak **to** one another and how we speak **about** one another.

1. Read James 3:1-12 to yourself.
2. If you’re in a group have someone read it out loud or have everyone read it out loud together.

**Bible Study Methods**



**Observation:** Make a list. What do you see that stands out in the passage? Look for key words or phrases, comparisons or contrasts.

**Question:**  Why do you think James tells us there is a stricter judgment for those who are teachers?



 **Verses 1-2 - Keep in mind:**

1. **A teacher is responsible to speak the truth.** God will hold the teacher accountable for the words that we speak and teach (Matthew 12:36). Real faith is devoted to teaching the truth of God and His Word.
2. **A teacher affects and influences our lives.** What we teach (and we are all teachers in some way) and the influence we have on others is extremely important. James is saying, if you have the responsibility of teaching but have a loose tongue it can cripple your ministry because people will question your integrity.
3. **A teacher is expected before God to live out the truth.** As teachers of the Word are we personally living out the very truth we are proclaiming to others? James is saying when a teacher stumbles, he or she can cause a whole crowd of people to stumble with them. If you can control your tongue you can control your life, but it starts with the heart.

*For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks* (Luke 6:45)

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**Talking it over – Group Study:**

Look at James 3:3-8 and discuss the following:

1. How do the illustrations that James gives us provide insight about our speech and faith? Which one stands out more vividly to you and why?
2. How have you personally felt the destructive power of words? When have you hurt someone with your words?

**Finish the sentence:** Striving to control our tongue is a sign of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Verses 9-12 - The tongue is necessary, but inconsistent!**

A person could be driving along singing praise to the Lord and someone cuts them off and they go from praising the Lord to cursing them out. James is saying this should not be. Our tongues reveal what is really going on in our heart.

**Question:** Look at James 9-12. How do these illustrations show the contrast in the power of the tongue?

**Take a moment:** Either on your own or in a group, sing a song of praise to the Lord.

*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name.* Hebrews 13:15



**Interpretation:** Ask a question – What does this mean? In one word or sentence what is the author’s main intent or purpose of the passage?



**Application:** Keys to Taming Your Tongue

1. What practical steps can you begin to take today in guarding your tongue from crippling your life, marriage, family, church, etc.?

*“Let no corrupt 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.”*(Ephesians 4:29)

1. Rely on God’s strength to help you. (Philippians 4:13)
2. Dedicate your heart and tongue to the Lord each day. (Psalm 19:14)
3. Put your heart in tune with God’s Spirit by daily reading His Word. (Proverbs 13:3)
4. Meditate on Scriptures that address the power of words. (Psalm 119:11)
5. Ask others to hold you accountable in what you say (Proverbs 27:17)
6. Ask for forgiveness for any unloving words or attitudes you have had toward another. (Ephesians 4:31-32)
7. Learn to speak words that inspire, encourage, comfort, and edify. (Philippians 4:8)



Take a moment and ask the Lord to remind you of the weight of your words. Pray that your words would reflect a genuine faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for others.



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