

James - Living Out Your Faith
“The Tongue Test”
James 3: 1-12

Taming the Tongue

¹*Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

²*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

³*When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.* ⁴*Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.*

⁵*Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.*

⁶*The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

⁷*All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man,* ⁸*but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

⁹*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.* ¹⁰*Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.* ¹¹*Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?*

¹²*My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

(James 3: 1-12 NIV)

James 3:1-12

Questions for personal or small group study and reflection:

1. What has James already said about our speech in 1:19, 26? Why does James warn us about becoming a teacher of the Christian faith? What kind of mistakes is a teacher prone to? Why is he/she to be judged more strictly? (2 Tim. 2:14-18)
2. What is one characteristic of a spiritually mature person? If a person can control his/her words, what else is he/she able to control? How can we show spiritual maturity if we are on the receiving end of an uncontrolled tongue? (1Pe. 2:23;3:13-17)
3. What do the illustrations in v. 3-5 tell us about the power of the tongue? How dangerous is the tongue? (v.5-8) Have you experienced situations in which your words or those of others have caused major damages to a relationship? If so, what has that resulted in, and what can be done about it?
4. How do we misuse the tongue? (v.9-10) Why do you think we do this? Are we committing the sins of the tongue? If so, what can we do about it? (Gal. 5:22-25) How do our words give indication about the state of our soul? (Luke 6:43-45)
5. Why is it so important to have a God-controlled tongue at home? (Deut. 6:6-7) Why do we tend to excuse ourselves for the way that we talk at home or with our families?
6. How can you use your words to bless someone this week? Pray Psalm 19:14 as you begin each day and ask for God's wisdom, discernment, patience, perseverance to guide you.