

DEEPER BIBLE STUDY

LESSON NOTES

TUESDAY, APRIL 14 | TAMING THE TONGUE (JAMES 3:1-12) | PASTOR ADAM AZIZ

James 3:1-12 teaches 3 major truths:

1. The tongue is _____
2. The tongue is _____
3. The tongue is _____

WORDS MATTER MORE THAN MOST PEOPLE THINK

James 3:1 (NLT)... Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.

- James opens chapter 3 by warning against eagerness to be teachers in the church – not because teaching is bad, but because it is weighty.
 - Jesus said: *Luke 12:48 (NLT)... When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.*
- Words matter for everybody.
 - Jesus said: *Matthew 12:36-37 (NLT)... And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. 37 The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.*

THE TONGUE REVEALS TRUE MATURITY

James 3:2 (NLT)... 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.

- We all stumble in word about _____: with our boasting, exaggeration, selective reporting.
- We all stumble in word about _____: with our criticism, gossip, slander, cruelty, two-facedness, anger, flattery and insincere words meant to gain favor.

- The word “perfect” carries the idea of mature, complete, fully developed.
- It takes maturity to _____ your mouth.
 - *Proverbs 10:19 (NLT)... Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.*
 - *Proverbs 17:27-28 (NLT)... A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered. 28 Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*

SMALL THINGS CAN CONTROL BIG THINGS

James 3:3-5a (NLT)... We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. 4 And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. 5a In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches...

- James gives some illustrations to help us understand his teaching.
- The bit and the rudder are small but extremely important. If they aren't controlled, the entire horse is out of control and the entire ship is out of control.
- If the tongue is like a bit in the mouth of a horse or the rudder on a ship, it leaves us with the question: Who or what holds the reins? Who or what directs the rudder?
 - James points us to having the Spirit of God (working through the new man) set His directing hands on the reins and rudder (our tongue).
 - *Proverbs 18:21 (NLT)... The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.*
 - *Proverbs 13:3 (NLT)... Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.*
 - Our prayer should be: *Psalms 141:3 (NLT)... Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips.*

AN UNTAMED TONGUE CAN DESTROY EVERYTHING

James 3:5b-6 (NLT)... But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. 6 And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

- Words can seem harmless in the moment but can they actually destroy everything.

- **James wants us to feel the danger of an out of control tongue.**
 - *Proverbs 16:27-28 (NLT)... Scoundrels create trouble; their words are a destructive blaze. 28 A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.*
 - *Proverbs 26:20-21 (NLT)... Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops. 21 A quarrelsome person starts fights as easily as hot embers light charcoal or fire lights wood.*
- **A tongue on fire usually reveals a heart that has not been surrendered...**
 - *Matthew 15:18-19 (NLT)... But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. 19 For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander.*

HUMANITY CANNOT TAME THE TONGUE WITHOUT GOD

James 3:7-8 (NLT)... People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

- **James says man has managed to tame animals but not the tongue because the tongue is connected to the fallen human heart.**
- **The tongue cannot be truly tamed by human willpower alone. We need the Holy Spirit.**
 - *Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)... But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*
- **James reveals that words can inject poison into the lives of others.**
 - *Ephesians 4:29 (NLT)... Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

INCONSISTENT SPEECH REVEALS SPIRITUAL CONTRADICTION

James 3:9-12 (NLT)... Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. 10 And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! 11 Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? 12 Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can’t draw fresh water from a salty spring.

- **James exposes a contradiction. Our speech should match our profession of faith.**
 - *Genesis 1:26-27 (NLT)... Then God said, “Let Us make human beings in Our image, to be like Us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.” 27 So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.*

- *1 John 4:20 (NLT)... If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?*
- This must become our prayer: *Psalm 19:14 (NLT)... May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to You, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

James continues by discussing the difference between earthly wisdom and Godly wisdom.

- **Earthly wisdom produces envy, strife, selfishness, and chaos.**
- **Godly wisdom produces purity, peace, gentleness, mercy, and good fruit.**