

Taming the Tongue

February 15, 2026

James 3:1-12 CSB

1 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body. 3 Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. 4 And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. 11 Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

The words that you say can reveal problems in your character, like hypocrisy.

The words that you say can bring pain and destruction to both you and the people around you.

The words that you say can take your life in a direction that you don't want to go.

Central Truth: In order to mature as a Christian, you must tame your tongue.

1 Pet. 2:22-23 ESV

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

James 1:26 ESV

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Luke 6:45 ESV

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.

Taming your tongue starts with your interior life.

3 reasons that it is critical for you to tame your tongue:

1. Your tongue must be guided because it sets the direction of your life.

James 3:3-5 CSB

3 Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. 4 And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest.

2. Your tongue must be restrained because it can be so destructive.

James 3:6-8 CSB

6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

An untamed tongue:

Destroys your character

Destroys the course of your life

Will you allow your tongue to run wild, setting your life on fire, or will you tame your tongue?

3. Your tongue must be purified because it can be so hypocritical.

James 3:9-12 CSB

9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. 11 Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

What you say about people should align with how God thinks about them.

Eph. 4:29 ESV

Let no corrupting 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.

Does this build someone up, or tear someone down?

What does it look like to tame your tongue?

- Taking a little longer to speak up while you ask the Holy Spirit if you should say this.
- Finding new vocabulary instead of swearing.
- Thanking God instead of complaining.
- Apologizing for what you've said.
- Honoring people by keeping certain things confidential.
- Seeking opportunities to encourage and bless people.

Is it true?

Is it helpful?

Is it kind?

James 3:8 CSB

but no human being can tame the tongue.

“For he does not say: “None can tame the tongue”; but “No man”; in order that, when it is tamed, we may acknowledge it to be effected by the mercy of God, the help of God, the grace of God. The soul, therefore, should endeavour to tame the tongue, and while endeavouring should pray for assistance.” - Augustine, Of Nature and Grace

Holy Spirit, what are some ways that you want to guide, restrain, and purify my tongue?