

PT. 6: TAMING THE TONGUE

SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:1-12

MAIN POINT: A SMALL ADJUSTMENT CAN LEAD TO A BIG CHANGE.

A WORD TO ASPIRING TEACHERS (v.1-2)

- *Not many of you should become teachers... because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (v.1)*

1. Be _____
2. Be _____
3. Be _____

POWER OF THE TONGUE (v.3-12)

1. The tongue _____

- *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. (v.14)*
- If you don't like the direction of your life, ask: which way is my tongue steering?
- Observations: _____

2. The tongue _____

- *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 body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. (v.5-8)*

- *The tongue has the power of life and death... (Proverbs 18:21)*

- Observations: _____

3. The tongue _____

- *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. (v.9-12)*

- *"Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)*

- Observations: _____

PT. 6: GROUP GUIDE

THEME:

Small words can shape big outcomes, so real faith learns to speak like Jesus.

SCRIPTURE:

James 3:1–12

ICE-BREAKER

1. What's a phrase someone once said to you that you still remember because it helped you?
2. If your words this week were turned into a "book," what genre would it be. Encouragement, comedy, complaint, suspense, hope, drama?

REFLECT (Read MATTHEW 16:13–18 TOGETHER)

3. James says the tongue is small but powerful (James 3:5). Why do you think God cares so much about what comes out of our mouths? (Proverbs 18:21)
4. Read James 3:3–4. What do the bit and rudder teach us about the direction of a life? Where have you seen words steer a relationship or season in a good direction? (Also Proverbs 13:3)
5. James compares the tongue to a fire that can set a whole forest ablaze (James 3:5–6). What kinds of words tend to start the biggest relational fires. Criticism, sarcasm, exaggeration, gossip, defensiveness, something else? (See also Ephesians 4:29)

6. James says our mouths can praise God and curse people made in God's likeness, and that "this should not be" (James 3:9–10). What does this teach us about the connection between worship and how we treat people? (See also Matthew 12:34)



TAKE ACTION

7. Which of the three powers of the tongue do you most need God's help with right now. Directing, destroying, or defining? Why? (James 3:3–6; Psalm 141:3)
8. What is one "small adjustment" you can make this week to tame your tongue. For example: pause before replying, pray before sending, replace criticism with curiosity, or speak one specific encouragement daily. (James 3:2; Proverbs 15:1)
9. Think of a conversation coming up this week where your words really matter. What would it look like to speak truth with grace in that moment, and what might you say differently than you normally would? (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6)
10. What would change in our group if our default language became life-giving. How can we help each other build a culture where people feel safe, strengthened, and challenged in love? (Proverbs 18:21)



CLOSING CHALLENGES

- Practice: Try a "Words Audit" for five days: at the end of each day, write down one sentence you wish you could take back and one sentence you're glad you spoke. Ask God to reshape tomorrow's words.
- Prayer: Pray for clean hearts and wise words, that God would set a guard over our mouths and make our speech a source of life to others.