



June 22, 2025
Real Wisdom for a Messy World
TAME YOUR TONGUE
James 3:1-12



1. **Opening Discussion:** (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. The English language has changed significantly over the past 50 years, both in content (new words) and in style. What changes have you seen in English since you were in grade school? How has the use of profanity changed? What about formal or courteous address? Is there a slang expression that you would like to see eliminated?
- b. Did anyone ever tell you, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me” – or did you ever use the expression with someone else? What does it mean to you, and do you think it is correct?
- c. Have you ever seen a forest fire? If not, have you perhaps driven through the mountains where a forest fire has burned? Describe what it was like. Is it hard to detect where the fire has burned? Think of the pictures or videos you may have seen of the major fires in California over the past several years. Can you imagine anything much more terrifying and indiscriminate than a wildfire?

2. **Prayer:**

- a. Adoration – Pray a Psalm or other Scripture to focus on praising God.
- b. Confession – Spend time confessing any known sins. 1 John 1:9
- c. Thanksgiving – Thank God for answered prayers, blessings, gifts, and opportunities to serve.
- d. Supplications
 - i. Pray for the activities of His Church locally and around the world.
 - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of others and yourself.
- e. **Least Reached People Group** (from the IMB “Loving the Lost Through Prayer” guide)

The Bo people live in central Laos on the east side of the mighty Mekong River. There are no known Bo believers, churches, or any gospel materials in their language. Many people in the surrounding area who have come to Christ have endured intense persecution from local authorities. New believers often suffer because their community sees their new faith as a betrayal. Reaching the Bo with the gospel will require an unwavering commitment and passionate prayer.

3. **Sermon Key Points for James 2:14-26**

- a. Respect How Your Little Tongue Can Enormously Impact Your Life
 - i. God cares a lot about what you say.
 - ii. Little things can have a large impact.
- b. Understand How Dangerous Your Words Can Be
 - i. Our words can cause terrible evil.

- ii. Does that describe your words, especially when stressed, hurting, frustrated, or angry?
- iii. Let the Holy Spirit truly tame your tongue.
- c. Speak with True Integrity
 - i. Integrity is about holistic consistency with who you really are.
 - ii. Don't speak life and death with the same mouth!

4. Bible Study:

- a. ***Sunday Afternoon*** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
 - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
 - iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
 - iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
- b. ***Monday:***
 - i. This week, the focus of the sermon and devotional is James 3:1-12. Read the passage a couple of times, meditating on what God is telling us through James' writing.
 - ii. How would you summarize the main point(s) James is making in this section? How applicable do you think his point(s) is (are) to Christians in America today?
 - iii. James uses several examples/illustrations to make an important point in the passage. Make a list of as many as you can identify. What is he illustrating with each?
 - iv. We are created in God's image and some scholars believe that one of the ways the image is most clearly demonstrated is in our ability to speak.
 - 1. Read these passages: Genesis 1:3, 1:27-28, 2:16, Psalm 33:6-9, and Hebrews 11:3. What do they show about the importance and use of speech by God? How does 2 Timothy 3:16 broaden our understanding of the importance of God's speech?
 - 2. Now read Genesis 3:1 & 4-5. Who else speaks? How is it different?
 - 3. Of these two examples, which does James tell us we are most likely to imitate?
- c. ***Tuesday:***
 - i. Read James 3:1-12 again, but today meditate on verses 1 & 2.
 - ii. What explanation does James give for telling his readers that not many should become teachers?
 - 1. How do Ephesians 4:11-14, 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, and Romans 12:6-8 support what James is saying in verse 1? Who do these verses say is actually responsible for selecting teachers?

2. Read Mark 9:42. How does Jesus' statement in this verse relate to what James says? Why should we not think that what Jesus is saying only applies to teaching children (see Ephesians 4:11-14 again)?
 3. What practical implications would you see in verse 1 for the local church's recruitment and selection of teachers for its various ministries and programs? Is the verse any less applicable to those teaching preschool children than to those teaching seniors?
- iii. What does James mean when he says "we all stumble" in verse 2? Compare with his statement in 2:10 (the same Greek word is translated stumble or fails). It is a well-known truth, but read 1 Kings 8:46, 2 Corinthians 6:36, Psalms 19:13, Proverbs 20:9, Romans 7:14-16, and 1 John 1:8-10. How many perfect teachers would James say there are?

d. Wednesday:

- i. Today, meditate on James 3:2-6.
- ii. What are the three visual images that James uses to help us understand the power of the tongue?
 1. How are the first two fundamentally different in purpose from the third?
 2. What is needed if either a bit or a rudder is going to be effective?
 3. Read Ephesians 4:29-30 and Colossians 3:8-11. What do they suggest about the first step in keeping the tongue in check?
- iii. James goes on to compare the tongue to a fire. What are the four facts about the tongue that James gives in verse 6?
 1. What do you think James means when he says that the tongue is "a world of unrighteousness"? How does Jesus make the same point in Matthew 15:11 & 18-19?
 2. What image is presented by the three descriptions that tell us the tongue is "staining the whole body", "setting on fire the entire course of life", and "set on fire by hell"? In your own words, what does verse 6 say about the importance/impact of our speech?

e. Thursday:

- i. Today, read the focal passage and meditate on verses 7-8.
- ii. After showing the extraordinary potential of the tongue to harm, what point is James making in verse 7? What is the typical human response when confronted with dangerous or adverse situations (think about how we describe efforts to minimize the impact of floods or the way progress fighting a fire is described)?
- iii. According to James, how does our ability to control the tongue compare to our efforts to control other forces/creatures? Which is easier?
- iv. Read Matthew 12:34-35, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 7:14-20, and Titus 1:15-16. What light do these passages shed on why no human can "tame the tongue"? What blessed hope do passages like 1 John 1:9 provide?

f. Friday:

- i. Meditate on James 3:9-12
- ii. What topic does James return to with verse 9 (compare James 1:5-8)? How does our speech most clearly demonstrate double-mindedness?
- iii. Verse 9 presents a perspective for considering others that we sometimes overlook or ignore. Why should the truth presented in Genesis 1:26 and 5:1 influence our speech to others?
 1. If we curse what God has made in His image, at least in one sense, what are we saying about Him and His work?
 2. What did Jesus teach us about cursing others (see Luke 6:27-29, Matthew 5:21-22, 5:44, and Romans 12:14)?
- iv. In verses 11 & 12, James again uses real-world illustrations to drive home the absurdity of double-minded speech. What are the two rhetorical questions he asks, and what is the expected answer?
 1. Jesus uses the same illustration in Matthew 7:16-20, 12:33-35, and Luke 6:43-45. What is His message to us in these passages? How does that relate to James' teaching about the tongue?
 2. The third illustration is a statement that no one would argue with. Read Exodus 15:22-25. While we cannot get fresh water from a salt pond, what can God do that is ever better?
 3. How does God provide a solution to tame our tongue (compare Matthew 12:34 and Ezekiel 36:26; also, Romans 10:8-9 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22)?

g. Saturday:

- i. Read these passages from Proverbs that describe ways we misuse our tongues: 6:16-17, 10:19, 12:22, 17:9 & 27, 18:13, 19:9, 20:19, 26:20 & 28, 27:2, 28:23, and 29:5 & 20. Between you and the Lord, how many have applied to you at some time in your life?
- ii. Now read Romans 10:14-15 and Colossians 3:15-17 that describe some very positive uses for our tongues. Again, between you and the Lord, how faithfully are you performing these tasks?
- iii. Close by reading meditatively James 3:1-12.

5. Application:

- a. The old saying “Don’t talk the talk, if you don’t walk the walk” (or one of its many variants) certainly contains an element of truth. Still, after studying this passage in James, we should seriously evaluate if our “talk” is upholding its end of the equation. Does our casual speech, the jokes we share, the expressions we use, and, most importantly, the way we talk about others even stand up to our “walk”? Do the things coming out of our mouths tend to lead others to Christ or serve to drive them away?
- b. Profane, crude, and off-color language has become so commonplace in our society that we sometimes become insensitive to it. What is your normal response to such language? How should a Christian respond or behave? And perhaps most important, what does our response (or lack of a response) communicate to our children or grandchildren (be practical and think in terms of the movies, TV shows, and comedians you routinely enjoy)?