

October 23rd Sermon

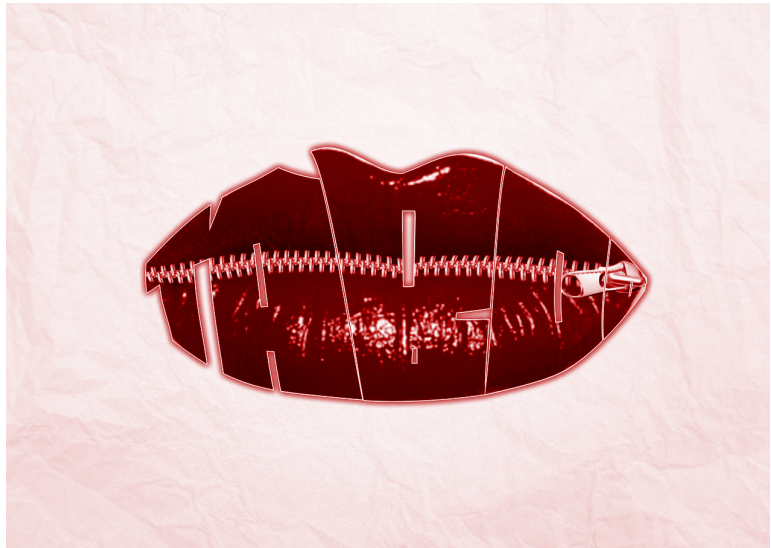
Faith that Works - Session 4

Taming the Tongue- James 3:1-12

Introduction

Words are not insignificant. Words can engender respect or reveal ignorance. Words can condemn and words can save. Words can cause pain and words can heal.

The tongue is a very small part of our bodies, yet it has the power to diffuse anger, share wisdom, and cultivate love. Using our tongue for God's glory is our goal.



James has some strong words about the misuse of the tongue in his letter. Let's dive in and find out what he has to say.

Say a short prayer asking God to show you the truth about how you can use your tongue for his glory.

Teachers of the Word

If you have ever had the opportunity to teach someone, then you are aware of the enormous responsibility you have to your student. But when you teach the word of God you not only have a responsibility to your student but also to God. Many words come to mind like trust and truth, respect and relationship, humility and honor. Reflect on the best teachers in your life and what made them special and effective.

Group Discussion

- Read Matthew 12:34 and 12:37. What does Jesus say about how critical words are?

Read James 3:1-2.

- Give an example of how a teacher's words lifted you up or devastated you.
- What is James' warning for teachers?

- What is Paul's warning to teachers in Romans 2:21-24? If you have the message Bible available (Bible app?) read that version of these verses aloud to your group before discussing.
- The Amplified Version of the Bible includes the following insight into James 3:1: "because we [teachers] have assumed greater accountability and more condemnation if we teach incorrectly." How should teachers of the Word use their God-given talent wisely?
- In verse 2 there are two special words: stumble and perfect. The word stumble in Greek is *ptaio* which means to trip, fall, or offend. The word perfect in Greek is *teleios* which means complete, finished, and full-grown. Keeping the definitions in mind, how would you explain verse 2 in your own words?

Individual Study

- What warnings does Paul give in Romans 14:21 and 1 Corinthians 8:13 that could apply to anyone, not just teachers?
- What are Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 5:2-3?
- What about the listeners, the students? What is their responsibility? See 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Acts 17:10-12.

Tongue Control

If you've never ridden a horse, piloted a sailboat, or fought a wildfire, these comparisons might be difficult to imagine. But in the ancient world they would have been very familiar.

Read James 3:3-8.

Group Discussion

- How are a tiny bit in a horse's mouth or a rudder on a large boat good examples of the effect a tongue can have on your life? Explain.
- Give an example of how you have seen the tongue used as the spark to set off a wildfire in someone's life.

Individual Study

- Give examples, besides swearing, of ways the tongue can do damage. See Psalms 10:7, Proverbs 15:1-2, 17:7, 19:9, 26:2, 20-24 to help enlarge your list.
- The tongue can also put out the flames and steer us on the right path. According to the following verses, what are some of the good things that words can do? See Proverbs 14:3 and 15:23, Isaiah 50:4, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6.

Double Tongued

There is a Danish proverb that says, "Keep not two tongues in one mouth." We have all heard idioms like "he speaks out of both sides of his mouth." Do you know someone like that? What effect does that have on the listener?

Read James 3:9-12.

In James 3:10 there are two words that emphasize the contrast illustrated here: blessing and cursing. The word blessing in Greek is *eulogia* (think eulogy) which means fine speaking, elegance of language, blessing, or benediction. The Greek word *katara* translates as cursing with an intensity that implies intent for harm or evil.

Group Discussion

- What does double-tongued mean to you?
- In the King James Version of 1 Timothy 3:8, Paul requires that deacons not be double-tongued. The NIV translation simply uses the word sincere instead. How would you clarify what is expected of the words of church leaders considering both translations? What other words would also convey that message?
- In 1 Peter 3:10, what does Paul tell us we must do?
- As you see the emphasis on how to use and not use our words is a common topic in the Bible. What message stands out for you in this lesson?

Individual Study

- List the suggestions that are given in the Bible to help us keep our tongues in check. See Proverbs 15:1, 15:28, 17:27, 21:23; Matthew 12:33-34, Luke 11:9-10, Romans 6:13, and Colossians 4:6.
- How does Colossians 3:12-17 sum up that list in far fewer words?

Commitment

This week I will put my faith into action by taking the following steps in controlling my tongue:
