



Sermon Discussion Guide

How to Manage Your Mouth

James - Part 4

“3 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. 3 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. 5 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. 9 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.” James 3:1-12

1. In James 3:1-12, what word pictures does James use to communicate the tongue’s power to do both good and evil?
2. Why do you think James uses so many illustrations? Which word picture do you find most meaningful?
3. James describes the untamed tongue as “a restless evil, full of deadly poisons” (verse 8). Describe a time when you have seen the effects of that “deadly poison” in your life or in the life of someone you know.

4. In verse 2, James clearly states that we all stumble and fail to honor God in the things we say. He writes, “*If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man.*” The Greek word for perfect is *teleos*, which means “mature” or “healthy”. Who in your life demonstrates the greatest maturity with his or her tongues? Be specific about why you chose that person.

- ◆ Describe a time when you were blessed by the words of someone who mattered to you. Contrast this with a time when you were hurt by another person’s thoughtless words. What can you do to develop the habit of encouraging others with your words?
- ◆ In what situations do you struggle most to control your own tongues? In conversations with your children? In hurtful moments with your parents? In disagreements with your spouse? Or some other place? What can the group do to help or support you?

Our speech can have tremendous impact on the lives of unbelievers. 1 Peter 3:15b says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” ... How do you respond to those who ask you about your faith? What have you learned about the importance of “gentleness and respect”?

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.*