

WOMEN OF GRACE

Lesson 5 | James 3:1-12

*“The tongue is you in a unique way. It is a tattletale that tells on the heart and discloses the real person. Not only that, but misuse of the tongue is perhaps the easiest way to sin. There are some sins that an individual may not be able to commit simply because he does not have the opportunity. But there are no limits to what one can say, no built-in restraints or boundaries. In Scripture, the tongue is variously described as wicked, deceitful, perverse, filthy, corrupt, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, blasphemous, foolish, boasting, complaining, cursing, contentious, sensual, and vile. And that list is not exhaustive. No wonder God put the tongue in a cage behind the teeth, walled in by the mouth!” – John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, James, p. 144*

MEMORIZATION VERSE

James 1:6

**But he must ask in faith without any doubting,
for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea,
driven and tossed by the wind.**

DAY 1 | The Tongue’s Potential to Condemn | Read James 3:1-12 (focusing on v. 1)

1. From your study in James 2, what did you find encouraging or convicting?

2. James directs his comments to which group of people in 3:1? What warning did he give to them?
 - a. Why do you think James singled out this group? What about their vocation or office makes them more accountable for their speech? What might make them more susceptible to sin in this area?

3. How does Paul's counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and 4:6–16 help you better understand James' warning?

4. Even if you are not a teacher of a class, we all teach at times (ie: parent to child, friend to friend). How does James' warning affect how you think about the counsel that you give to others?

5. How can this passage, along with Hebrews 13:17, influence the way you interact with the leadership in your church, and how should it inform your prayers for them?

DAY 2 | The Tongue's Power to Control | Read James 3:1-12

*““Perfect” may refer to true perfection, in which case James is saying that, hypothetically, if a human being were able to perfectly control his tongue, he would be a perfect man. But, of course, no one is actually immune from sinning with his tongue. More likely, “perfect” is describing those who are spiritually mature and thus able to control their tongues.” – John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1900*

1. According to verses 2–4, what claim did James make regarding the mature Christian who can bridle his tongue?

2. In James 1:26 and 2:2–4, how does James connect faith and speech? See also Matthew 12:34–37.
 - a. According to these verses, what is generally true about the person who cannot control his speech?

3. According to James 3:3–5, what power does the tongue have?
 - a. Share with your group a time you have personally seen the power of the tongue to control, shape, or direct a life either positively or negatively. What did you learn from the situation?

DAY 3 | The Corruption of the Tongue and Difficulty to Tame It | Read James 3:1-12 (focusing on vs. 5-8)

1. From James 3:6 and your Bible study notes or other resources, identify 2–3 principles about the tongue and its dangers.

2. Why do you think James makes such extreme statements regarding the dangerous bent of the tongue? Do you think that the tongue is as dangerous as James says? Why or why not?
 - a. What would you change in your normal interactions with other people if you believed and lived according to the reality of James 3:6?

3. In verses 7–8, what contrast does James make? What does this say about the tongue?
 - a. Read Psalm 141:3 and Proverbs 21:23. How do these verses reconcile with James’s claim?

- Is your life manifesting a godly, Spirit-empowered control over your speech? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal the ways you sin in your speech and what needs to change. Share that with your group.

DAY 4 | Examining Sins of Speech | Selected Scriptures

- From the following verses, identify some of the most common sins of the tongue, then identify the root cause or heart issue underlying that sin, and ask the Lord to help you create a plan to fight that sin in your own life. Use Scripture to support your answers.

Verses	Sin	Heart Issue(s)	Verses to help you battle this sin in your life, and practical steps you will take to mortify the sin
Psalm 34:13 Colossians 3:9			
James 4:1-2 2 Timothy 2:23-24			
James 4:13-16 Jeremiah 9:23-24			
Proverbs 11:13 Proverbs 17:9			
Psalm 12:2-3 Proverbs 29:5			
James 4:11 Proverbs 14:29 Ephesians 4:31-32			
Ephesians 4:29 Ephesians 5:3-5			
Philippians 2:14-15 James 5:9			

2. Which of these sins do you struggle with the most? How can you live differently in light of the instruction in Scripture? Ask someone to hold you accountable in this area.

DAY 5 | The Heart-Revealing Tongue | Read James 3:1-12 (focusing on vs. 9-12)

1. According to James 3:9–12 and Mark 7:20–23, what is the root problem of all evil speech?
2. In verse 9, what specific sin does James address? How does Genesis 1:26 deepen your understanding of the seriousness of this sin?
3. Take a few moments for quiet, Spirit-led introspection. What recent “transgressions of the tongue” have you seen in your own life? From 1 John 1:9, what is the apostle’s solution?
4. Are there people against whom you have publicly sinned through your speech? What do you need to do to make this right? What direction is provided in Matthew 5:21–24?
 - a. Share with your group one practical step you have taken or will take this week to control and direct your conversations with others because of what you have learned in James.

James 3:1-12

I. Hold Your Tongue (vv. 1-6)

II. Tame Your Tongue (vv. 7-8)

III. Stop Being Double-Tongued (vv. 9-12)

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