

Life Group Study
A Faith That Helps Me Filter What I Say
Week of June 20th, 2021
Study by Wayne Arcand

The focus of this study is the Book of James, chapter 3. We are all teachers in many ways through our interactions with people of all ages, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The ability to communicate on many levels is a precious gift that God has blessed us with. However, whether that communication is a blessing or it creates harm depends on the heart of the person who is talking.

Taming the Tongue

James 3:¹ *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.*

¹³ *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

¹⁷ *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

Would you open this study with a general discussion considering the following questions? You may come up with additional questions that would further the discussion and the group's understanding of why teachers will be judged more strictly.

1. Was there one teacher that made a positive impact on your life? Why?
 - a. Could you name the characteristics of the teacher that made a positive impact?
2. Was there one teacher that had a negative impact on your life? Why?
 - a. Could you name the characteristics of the teacher that made a negative impact?
3. Which of the above teachers had the greater long lasting influence on who you are today? Why

Would you agree that there is power in the words that are spoken? With our words we can show love or hate, build up or tear down, encourage or discourage, bless or curse. Let us do a little study on the power of words and how God views what we say.

4. What does Hebrews 11:3³ *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*) tell us about the power of God's word? Take a minute to think about this. Consider the infinite size and complexity of this universe that science is only beginning to understand, all created by the spoken word of our God. What are some things that amaze you the most?
5. *Ephesians 4:*²⁹ *When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you. (NCV)*
 - a. What are the harmful things we say?
 - i. What motivates us to say them?
 - ii. What impact does the harmful things we say have:
 1. on others,
 2. on us,
 3. on the Body of Christ
 4. on our witness

The resulting hurt may be great. Apologies can be made and errors can be corrected but the damage from unloving words may not be able to be fully eradicated. Forgiveness may, in some instances, come quickly, but trust always takes longer to be re-earned.

- b. What are words that will help others become stronger?
 - i. What motivates us to say them?
 - ii. What impact does the encouraging things we say have:
 1. on others,
 2. on us,
 3. on the Body of Christ
 4. on our witness

For Reflection:

The way we communication can tell a lot about our heart. In Luke 6:45, Jesus says that people can be judged by what they say and do because these things reveal what is in the person's heart. *(A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.)* If we want to change what comes out of our mouth, we need to change our heart. This can only be done as we submit to the will of the Father and allow the Spirit of God to develop the character of Jesus in us.

I would encourage all of us to pray Psalm 139:23 and 24, *"²³ Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*, and ask the Lord to show us those times when we have spoken in a way that would hurt someone. I pray the Lord would soften our hearts that we might be full of love toward one another and that we may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:12,13).