

James
Women's Bible Study Revised 2022

Lesson 10: James 3:1-12
Taming the Tongue

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things out not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

James after explaining how a life of faith is demonstrated or evidenced or justified by our works, he begins chapter 3 expanding on a subject that he has already touched on – the tongue. This is a new test of faith that a believer should examine introspectively.

1) Read James 1:18. Remind yourself what James was saying in this verse.

2) Another demonstration of a true believer's living faith is ... (Matthew 12:34-37)

As we said in our discussion of James 1:26 "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless," the tongue is really a heart issue. MacArthur explained that "in Hebrew thought, the distinction between the mand and the guilty. Members is not so clearly distinguished. The Hebrew, frankly, focuses very often on the guilty member rather than on the heart issue." He goes on to say, "but in the Hebrew desire for concrete expression and practical expression, they very often spoke of the very member of the body itself as if it were the guilty party." Finally he concludes by saying "James, in a sense, personifies the tongue as the living symbol of what is in the heart."

3) I think it's important to discuss the importance of what the tongue utters – namely speech or words. Do you draw any spiritual significance from this?

4) Earlier when we discussed James 1:19 "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger," we came to the conclusion that one of the ways to interpret this verse was in our personal speech. The other way has to do with how James explains this slow to speech in James 3:1. Who are the teachers to whom James refers and why should there not be many teachers?

5) Outside of James, the tongue/mouth/tongue is spoken of in the Bible. What are some comparisons/metaphors/descriptions that are used to describe the tongue? Explain the verses and why these comparisons are used.

6) Read James 3:2. In this context, what do the following words mean?

- **Stumble**

- **Perfect**

Explain this verse then in the light of these meanings.

7) Would you agree or disagree that James is saying in James 3:2 that if a person can master his tongue, he can master his evil tendencies throughout his whole body? Explain your answer.

8) Read James 3:3-12 and list the comparisons/metaphors/descriptions that are used to describe the tongue? (Don't look ahead, as I have named them. Find them on your own).

9) Let's explain the in depth meanings of these comparisons and the spiritual implications of these comparisons.

- ***A bit in a horse's***

- ***Small rudder on a boat/ship***

- ***Fire***

- ***Beasts***

10) Read James 3:9-10. These two verses are VERY strong admonitions to control our tongues. What makes it so a strong admonition? How are we made in the likeness of God?

11) In James 3:11-12, James finally gets to the crux of the matter with our tongue. What is the point of these two verses?