



Becoming a People Who... Live their Faith

Taming the Tongue

Message Notes, May 12, 2019

James 3: 1-18

We are studying through the book of James in a mini-series: *A People Who Live their Faith*. The author (believed to be James the brother of Jesus) is writing to Christians “scattered among the nations” about how to *practically* live out their faith. Today, we examine the challenge of **taming the tongue**.

- * Many scriptures throughout the Bible address the issue of our tongues/our speech (esp. *Proverbs*).
- * *James* is like a new testament book of Proverbs – offering straightforward wisdom for living out our faith in everyday life, including direct guidance about the tongue (today’s passage in James 3)
- * These words of wisdom are NOT trying to give us a formula for our speech or lists of acceptable and unacceptable words. They reveal the power of our words (for good or ill) and the central truth . . .
God desires our words to speak life.

4 Core Principles about our Tongues:

1. The tongue is tough to control. This is hard for us!

The tongue is strong like a horse-controlling bit, a ship-steering rudder, a spark that starts a wildfire.

2. Our speech is a tool. Yes, it can’t cause damage, but it can also express love, joy, hope, bring life.

Proverbs 18:21 – “the tongue has the power of life and death”. How we choose to use our words has real consequences – “those who love it [guard their tongue] will eat its fruit.”

3. The heart is where our speech originates. It’s not about rules or lists, but the attitude of our hearts.

Matthew 12: 33-37 – “... out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”

“...people will have to give an account... for every idle word they have spoken.”

* “Idle words” – petty, meaningless chatter, thoughtless words. (and also, cruel and hurtful words).

4. Our hope for taming our tongues comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

* Holy Spirit produces the PURITY of God in us

* Holy Spirit brings the transforming POWER of God into our lives.

* Holy Spirit brings purity to our speech by his transforming power at work IN us.

James ends his discourse here about the tongue with a summary expression of the wisdom of God (God’s purity of thought and speech for us) . . . “wisdom from above is pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” James 3:17-18

May our mouths be seasoned with such “wisdom from above” ... by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Other verses regarding our words:

* Ephesians 4:14-15

* Ephesians 4:25

* Ephesians 4:29

* Matthew 5:21-24

