

Small Group Guide 6 James 3:1–12 (ESV)

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For 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. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look 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. ⁵ So 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! ⁶ And 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. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

I. God Speaks

II. The Serpent Speaks

III. People Speak

1. Recognize the Great Responsibility of Teaching God's Word v.1
-Matthew 12:36–37
2. Recognize the Great Potential of Sinning in What We Speak! V.2
-Romans 3:13–14
3. Recognize the Great Power of the Tongue. V.3-6
4. Recognize Our Inability to Tame the Tongue v.7-10
5. Recognize that Our Words are an Indication of Our Hearts v.11-12
-Mark 7:14–23
-Luke 6:43–49

6. The Church Speaks

1. Recognize Our Responsibility to Speak the Truth in Love to One Another
-Ephesians 4:11–16
2. Recognize Our Responsibility to Take the Gospel to Our Neighbors and to the Nations

We need to recognize that the tongue is untamable, capable of great damage, and an indicator of our hearts, but God has a gracious provision in the gospel for our sinful words.

Questions for Reflection and Application:

- Recall a time when you've hurt someone with your words. What was motivating you?
- What's wrong with the idea that our actions, and not our words, are what really matter?
- The God of the Bible is the God who speaks. How should that reality affect our view of words, including our own?
- Explain why the potential for great damage is so great in the case of teachers.
- What are some characteristics we should look for in teachers of God's Word?
- What do our words tell us about our hearts?
- Why is the tongue so difficult to control?
- How would you counsel another believer whose conversation is often impure?
- What are two or three practical ways you can be more careful with your words?
- How do James's instructions apply to social media—texts, e-mails, Internet communication, etc.?
- What should we expect from unbelievers in terms of their words?