

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

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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! <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup> From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? <sup>12</sup> 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?