

Get It Under Control

James 3:1-12

September 20, 2020

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Sticks X Stones

Reflect

Outline: Recap

Realize

Points to Ponder

Respond

Questions to draw out understanding.

REFLECT

We've all had those times where we didn't realize the power contained in something we thought was insignificant...small choices that turned out to be big decisions. Little acts of kindness that made a huge difference. Or our words! Words are such a seemingly small part of who we are, but they have the power to make or break us. If it's ever felt like an impossible task to get your tongue under control, this message is for you! The book of James has so much to teach us about controlling our mouths...and how much is at stake when we speak.

[LINK to SMALL GROUP VIDEO MATERIALS](#)

REALIZE

1. The tongue is small but powerful

- **James 3:1-6**
- **Leader Notes**
 - The book of James gets right to the heart of the matter, these verses on our words are incredibly convicting. But it's important that we remember that we're not saved by what we do OR say. We have been saved by the grace of God, and that reality should affect how we speak.
 - James uses three examples of very small things that have tremendous impact, and the tongue is the same way. Our words steer our whole life, like a horse's bridle or a ship's rudder. They can spread the good news of the gospel, or they can spread damage, just like the spark that starts a wildfire.
 - As we consider our words, it's important to remember the two main functions that they serve in our lives. First, they show us what is going on in our heart, and second, they direct where our lives are heading.
- **Describe a time you experienced the power of words positively in your life. Describe a time you experienced the opposite effect. Are your words starting good or bad fires?**

2. The tongue must be tamed

- **James 3:6-8**
- **Leader Notes**
 - God, by his Holy Spirit, wants all of us to have our words under control. James says, "No man can tame the tongue..." But he doesn't say God can't tame the tongue! Only by God's power and might can we do this seemingly impossible task.

- Let's not miss the cultural moment we're in right now. Everyone is so divided, to an extent we've rarely seen before. Because things are crazy, so many people are out of control with their words because their feelings are coming out sideways. As followers of Jesus, we have to let the Holy Spirit govern our words.
- When we are stressed out or angry, our words tend to be our first line of defense. If we're not careful, we will use them in damaging ways. We need to ask ourselves if our words are helping a situation, and if they are not, we need to stop talking.
- **Be honest with yourself about the way you've been using words in the midst of our current cultural moment. Are you reflecting Jesus in the way you speak — both verbally and on social media? How do you need to alter the way you speak to more accurately mirror the heart of God for others?**

3. The tongue should be intentionally deployed

- **James 3:9-12**
- **Leader Notes**
 - Too often, we praise God with the same mouth that we use to shout people down. That's not okay. If we walk in the Spirit, we need to control our tongues. The very people we would be most likely to bicker with are often the people God is seeking, and we could join their journeys of faith as part of that process. It displeases God when we speak ill of or toward other people, so to try to "bless" God after "cursing" another person grieves the Lord.
 - God wants us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to walk surrendered to him, and we can't leave our tongues out of that equation. Even the way we use our words needs to be surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit of God himself prays through us when we ask him. When our tongue is a weapon used for our own advantage, we will make a mess. However, when we surrender our words to the Spirit of God in prayer, he is able to do more transformation than we ever could have dreamed.
- **Are you intentional in the way you use your words? Are you speaking with other people using the same kind of language you would use with God himself?**

Optional Follow-up Questions:

- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?
- How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?
- Why did God design it to work that way? Why not just do (whatever else) instead?
- What would you say to someone who disagrees with that?
- Why do we really have to do it like that? Why can't we just go (some other route) instead?