

## James 3:1-18

### Week 4 - Taming the Tongue

#### Introduction

? Think about the power words have had on you in your life, whether good or bad. How have others' words impacted your life? When have you utilized this power of words?

#### James 3:1-18 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup> We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

<sup>3</sup> When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup> Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup> Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup> The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

<sup>7</sup> All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have 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 the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

## Part I: verse 1-2

? Why would James single out teachers as it relates to “taming the tongue”?

? With this in mind, why do you think James would point out that not many should become teachers?

### Proverbs 26:18-19 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup> Like a maniac shooting  
flaming arrows of death

<sup>19</sup> is one who deceives their neighbor  
and says, “I was only joking!”

### Proverbs 16:24 (NIV)

Gracious words are a honeycomb,  
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

? Looking at the Proverbs verses, what stands out to you about the power of words?

## Part II: verse 3-12

? What do you think James is trying to communicate through the metaphors in verses 3-6? How do these relate to what the text says about the tongue?

? In verse 8 it says that “no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” This sounds rather bleak-- how do we have hope in the midst of being unable to control the tongue?

### Matthew 12:34-37 (NIV)

<sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. <sup>35</sup> A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. <sup>36</sup> But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

? In your own life, how have you seen your words reflect what is in your heart?

? Why is it inconsistent to have praises and curses coming from the same mouth?

? How are you doing in this area? In what ways do you see yourself falling into the pattern of both praising and cursing like it talks about in verses 9 and 10?

### **Part III: verse 12-18**

#### **Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

? What does wisdom look like that doesn't come from God?

? Reflect on some of the "wisdom" that our culture prescribes. What are some of the "wisdoms" you feel tempted to listen to and act out?

? How are you able to tell if wisdom is from God vs. earthly wisdom?

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

? Is there an area in your life that you need to control what comes out of your mouth? How can we help keep you accountable?