

My BIG Mouth!

1 of 4 (PART 1) | James 3:1-12 | Put a Sock in It!

SLIDE 1 Introduction

When we think of what the Bible says about our tongues, most of us would be drawn to the passage in James which talks about how our mouths can direct the whole course of our lives. But before we land there, let me first share a few comments about how we are as natural people.

Often we listen to what others say and pick it apart. However, we are oblivious to what we say and how it affects our lives and the lives of others. It's amazing how we can see the problems in others and remain ignorant to those same things in our lives we do that destroy our own lives and relationships

Secondly, we are always talking about how others should change, when what really needs to change is the way we talk about them. You cannot change others, unless it is by force. It's the work of the Holy Spirit that brings change to our lives. So we must spend more time in private prayer for others than in public announcement of everything we think is wrong with them.

Thirdly, the Bible is tremendous at changing our lives when we apply it to how we live, not use it to compare ourselves with others. We must apply its knowledge to our mouths if we want to change the course of our lives.

Finally, this series is designed to teach you to how and why to control your tongue, and thereby control your life, It does not focus on changing others.

And that brings us right into the third chapter of James:

SLIDE 2 James 3:1-12 (NIV) *"1 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 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.**"*

When we begin to instruct others on how they should live, the Bible defines us as "teachers." As a result, God begins to examine every word that comes out of our

mouths and sees how we are applying it to our own lives. He will judge us accordingly.

Many times the problems that arise for us are direct result of how we speak about others. Everyone stumbles. We ought to therefore have compassion and bless those who curse us. Lest we fall under the judgment of the Lord.

The first step to being as perfect as we think we are is to bridle our tongues. It will not only cease to do damage to others, it will start bringing blessings upon our lives.

That's what Jesus told us to do in Luke 6:

SLIDE 3 **Luke 6:27, 28 (NIV)** *"²⁷ But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."*

So we are to be doing good for those we talk ugly about, blessing them before others, and praying for them privately. But far too often we are filling others in on all the terrible things we think they are doing to us, garnering sympathy for ourselves through overt manipulation of others disguised as a prayer request.

Tell me, is it more beneficial for others to know what you have suffered, or to speak directly to the Lord in prayer for your enemies? Which produces more results. Well, that depends on the results you want. Do you want others to feel sorry for you? Do you want others to look down on those you look down on and foster the same opinion of them as you hold? Or, do you want God to help them overcome without the shame of public exposure for what they have done?

Well, back to James, verse 3:

SLIDE 4 *"³ When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ 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."*

This is the key principle that this entire series is based on. The Bible tells us that the steering wheel that our vessel possesses is our mouth. Whether it's a horse or a ship,

you can direct it wherever you want to go simply by controlling the part that changes its course. For us, that is our mouths. You can go where you want to go in life simply by directing the words that come out of your mouth. (More on that later in the series.)

Even though we would confess that this is true, few do anything about it. Because of this, the best thing some of us can do is “put a sock in it!” Why? because we are bringing destruction to our lives if we do not watch how we speak, what we speak about, and why we say what we say?

Jesus said it this way:

SLIDE 5 Matthew 15:18 - 20 (NIV) *“¹⁸ The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts –murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, **slander**. ²⁰ These are what defile a person.”*

All the time we are looking at someone else and saying we would never defile ourselves like that. So, we mimic a Pharisee by defiling ourselves with unclean words of condemnation for others and self-justification for ourselves.

Slander is defined in the Bible as a whispering, something you don’t want everyone to know. Especially the one you are talking about. It’s a defamation of another person’s character. It also is simply an evil report of what someone else did or what you think their intent was.

One of the worse forms of gossip is speculating upon a person’s intent by what they said or did. We need to think better of others. Let God judge their hearts. It’s not always about them attacking you. Maybe the real enemy is your self image.

Again, back to James, verse 5:

SLIDE 6 *“⁵ 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.** ⁶ 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.”*

One of the problems with our tongues is that we use it to win people to our side, make them see our view, and convince them of our opinion. In other words, when we open our mouths we go to war with the minds of those around us. Rather than speaking encouragement into their hearts, we try to enslave them for our purpose.

We are using our mouths to get something from others, instead of depositing something into their lives. And when we do deposit something, it's a curse, or a fear, or a doubt in their own worth or ability. We are tearing others down with our words, not realizing that we are heaping the judgment of God on our heads for doing so.

Where I hear it most is between family members and anyone who has some sort of authority over us. In the work place, in the government, or in the church, we can't accept anything we don't agree with without complaining about it and backbiting those who hold positions in our lives. Sometimes our tongues seem out of control, seeking a feeling that we have "aired our opinion", "said our piece" and "got it off our chest."

James continues with this:

SLIDE 7 *"⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but **no human being can tame the tongue.** It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."*

James tells us plainly, without God's help, we cannot control our tongues as we ought to. First the Holy Spirit needs to make us aware of the things we are saying that are bringing destruction to our lives. This is by first convincing us that what we say actually does affect how we live and enjoy life.

Example: I'm an avid complainer. As a result, I nitpick and find little enjoyment in life. Nor do I find much satisfaction in my labors.

However, I am realizing that changing all of this starts with speaking better things to others, and to myself. They call this self-speak and some are given to hateful words about themselves. The Bible call this self-condemnation. We have a Blue Sheet on this for today in the foyer, from Rick Warren.

We need the Holy Spirit to make us aware of the wrong things we say. Also, he needs to show us what these things are actually doing to us and our relationships. *“Let the blind lead the blind,”* but don’t be blind yourself. We need operational conviction over our words. May God open our eyes to the destructive force we have allowed for too long in our lives.

(END MESSAGE HERE - EQUIPMENT FAILURE)

SLIDE 8 *“⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ **Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.** My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”*

Double-tongued means double-minded. We speak out of both sides of our mouths. In other words, when we are in the presence of those we despise, we speak graciously and would never admit our true feelings to them. Yet, when we are away from them, we speak differently to others about them. It’s scary how self-deceived we can become without the Holy Spirit’s conviction and illumination.

Although James continues his “tirade” throughout this chapter, we will close with this:

SLIDE 9 *“¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”*

This is the deception we must face if we are going to change our lives for the better. We must admit that a *“little leaven, leavens the whole lump.”* (Galatians 5:9)

Thankfully, this principle works both ways.

Cease with any tainted words about others, and begin the process of speaking only for the benefit of others, *“that it might minister grace to them.”*

SLIDE 10 **Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)** *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but **only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**”*

The KJV says, *“that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”*

When it comes to tearing others down by your comments, remember, it is tearing your house down too.

Earlier in James we read this:

SLIDE 11 James 1:26 (NIV) *“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and **their religion is worthless.**”*

We don't want our religion to be “worthless” do we? Then we better start watching what we say to one another and about one another.

The Apostle Peter said this:

SLIDE 12 1st Peter 3:10 (NIV) *For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.”*

Peter is quoting Psalm 34, verses 12 and 13. The KJV says “guile” for “deceitful speech,” which means treachery. Treachery is when we betray the trust of someone else in order to deceive others and garner their support against that person.

SLIDE 13 Altar Time

Have you been criticizing others? Have you been down on yourself verbally? Let us pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to reveal and convict the speech that is tripping us up and unleashing the work of the devil in our lives and families.

It all starts with learning to control the words that come out of our mouths. Next Sunday we will talk about the creative force of our words to do good, when we bring them in line with what God's says about us through his Word.