



October 20-21, 2020

Series: James

Message: James 3: Taming The Tongue

Teacher: Maura Ringley

The Main Thing: *It's more than the condition of our words, it's the condition of our hearts.*

Scriptures: James 3:1-12 (Main focus); Luke 12:48; Ezekiel 36:26; John 7:38

Bible Background Notes:

Main points: The power of the tongue for evil or for good. Small items or even one teacher, can, and often do, control a larger whole. When the tongue is influenced by evil, the result is severe double-mindedness. James' use of "body" refers to individuals and to the Christian church as a whole.

3:1 Some teachers at the time were teaching the "wisdom" of Jewish revolutionaries, which was leading to violence.

3:2 Jewish doctrine often said that everyone sinned and that the mouth was a common instrument of sin.

3:3-4 James uses common metaphors of the time (horses, ships) to illustrate the power of a small instrument. The church is controlled by those in leadership roles and teachers must be under proper authority.

3:5-6 The passage suggests the flames associated with hell, and the tongue creating fire was an image often depicted in passages such as: Psalm 52:1-4; Psalm 39:1-3; Psalm 120:2-4; Proverbs 16:27; Proverbs 26:21; Ecclesiastes 28:21-23. Fire was greatly feared at that time, because there were few resources to battle it, illustrating the tongue's destructive power, often guilty of realizing its potential for evil. The great "world of evil" is seen in smaller, specific examples.

3:7-8 People were appointed over creatures (Genesis 1:26,28; Psalm 8) but the tongue was like the deadliest snake, full of toxic venom (Psalm 140:3) The animal kingdom at that time symbolized disorder that could be tamed. Limit displays of irrational anger.

3:9-10 Whatever one does to another human, it's as if you are doing that to God, because they are made in His image. We fail to perceive in one another God's image. Cursing mortal enemies was incompatible with worshipping God. An out of control tongue can destroy much good that was already done. Speech reveals our character.

3:11-12 Figs, olives, and grapes were the most common crops in the Mediterranean region.

Sources: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary OT/NT; The NIV Application Commentary: James (David P. Nystrom)*

SMALL GROUP TIME

Icebreakers: Have you ever said something really embarrassing, and then immediately wished you hadn't said it?

Questions:

Everyone has something they struggle with.

Does this reassure you that you are not alone?

How can our group hold each other accountable in the midst of our struggles?

How can having control over our words help us keep the rest of our lives in check?

Words can have power/impact in positive ways.

What book, speech, or teaching has impacted you with its words?

Words bring us together or tear us apart.

How have you seen that in your friendships?

In your family?

How have you been impacted by someone else's criticism?

What words or criticisms do you carry around with you?

How did you reply to their criticism?

Have you ever said something so mean that it impacted the other person deeply?

Have you ever apologized to that person? Why or why not?

How would your words change if you remembered that every person we meet is a child of God?

To tame the tongue, we have to change our heart, and only Jesus can do that.

What does your heart look like right now?

Have you asked Jesus to change it?

Jesus forgives us. How can you do the same for others?

James' use of the word "body" refers to individuals and to the Christian church as a body.

Have you ever said something at Journey that spread gossip or criticized another person?

Have you taken the time to encourage another person at Journey?