

Read James 3:7-10

How to tame the tongue

1. Introduction

- a. What is the most common thing that people do every day?
- b. Is it eating?
 - i. Most people eat around 3-4 times a day
- c. Is it sleeping?
 - i. Most people sleep around 6-7 hours a day
 - ii. 7-8 if they care about their health
- d. What if I told you it's talking.

- i. There is a statistic that men speak 7,000 words a day
- ii. Women speak 20,000 a day
- iii. You might say, 'but I know some pretty quiet women!'
- iv. Yes there are indeed some very quiet women, but you forget we have social media, where quiet women are constantly talking!
- e. Talking is arguably the most frequent activity that people do on a daily basis
- f. People talk to communicate logistical things
 - i. to plan where they're going to be
 - ii. to communicate ideas
 - iii. to express emotions etc.

g. Biblically, the tongue holds the very power of life and death.

i. Proverbs 18:21 says,

21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue,

And those who love it will eat its fruit.

h. Speaking of the tongue's power to create death

(Depp Heard Trial)

i. 8 miles from here

ii. in a courtroom

iii. there is a lawsuit being held between two

famous people for \$100 million

iv. What is this great lawsuit over?

1. Defamation

2. Words

v. The power of the tongue indeed can bring life or death

i. This is why in James 1:26 James wrote,

i. 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

j. Because of the power of the tongue

k. James challenges people to see if their faith is true and alive or fake and dead as we saw back in chapter 1,

i. said that if you cannot tame your own tongue

ii. you deceive yourself

iii. and your Christianity is worthless

l. So we can't help but ask, 'ok James, how do we tame the tongue then?'

- m. And that is the title of our sermon today, 'How to Tame The Tongue'.

How to tame the tongue

1. Recognize that God judges our tongue (v.1-2)

a. Exposition – v.1

i. First God starts his judgement at the top

1. He begins with the leaders of the church

2. If the leaders misuse the tongue

a. Then you can't expect the ones

following them to do better

3. So God's judgement of the tongue starts

from top to bottom

ii. And this is what James teaches

1. that pastors will receive greater judgement

from God

2. because their work revolves around using

the tongue

a. Speaking

b. Preaching

3. And as you will see in the next verses

a. that the tongue is the most difficult to

control

b. and also the most destructive

iii. In addition, God holds teachers more

accountable

1. than those who are not

2. This is because they are leading people with
their mouth

a. to either life

b. or destruction

3. There is such a tremendous power and
responsibility in teaching

a. that God brings a warning along with it

iv. This is why James says, not many of you should
become teacher

1. Not many of you should be pastors

v. Talking about God is the most dangerous thing
you can do

1. One little error

2. one little misrepresentation of God can be
direct slander against almighty God

3. If kings would execute people for one little
wrong word
4. imagine how much more
5. the king of the universe
6. God himself
7. This is because God cares deeply about
what we say with our tongue
8. He judges our tongue

vi. And unfortunately

1. there are many people who teach
2. who should not be teaching
3. Many churches have many people teaching
who should not be teaching
4. They are either not gifted
 - a. or not trained enough to teach

5. and at worst

a. they misrepresent God

6. and at best

7. they are wasting hours of peoples time

8. People do not benefit

a. do not grow when people who are not
gifted to teach

i. teach

vii. Illustration

1. Steve Lawson commented on this saying,

2. 'would you like someone to do open heart
surgery on you who doesn't have a medical
degree? How about someone does open
heart surgery on your spiritual heart, your
soul?'

3. This is not to say that a seminary degree is
the end all be all

4. but to denote the seriousness of teaching

5. and the serious preparation in order to
teach people about God

6. That is why the word of God says in 2 Tim
2:15,

a. Be diligent to present yourself
approved to God as a workman who
does not need to be ashamed,
accurately handling the word of truth.

7. Unfortunately, churches today often belittle
the seriousness of teaching and just let
anyone teach

viii. Something I notice in Filipino congregations is

how we use pastor as a title

1. like saying Pastor Rolly
2. I think that's a good and respectful way of honoring the office of pastor
3. At the same time
4. I often hear Filipinos call almost anyone who teaches a pastor
 - a. We tend throw the word pastor around a lot

ix. Application

1. Hear this
2. the only people you can call a pastor are only if they are officially recognized as a pastor by a local church

3. In our church, that means the only person
you should be calling pastor, is pastor Rolly

4. This is why I tell people to not call me
pastor

5. Even if a person is ordained

a. even if a person was a pastor in the
past

6. if he is not currently officially recognized by
a church as pastor

7. then he isn't a pastor and you should not
call him one

8. If you want to respect the office

a. Don't just call anyone pastor

9. Does this mean that only pastors can teach?

a. No

- b. Every Christian to a degree is to teach
 - c. Every Christian should be able to teach those younger in the faith than they
 - i. about basic Christian teaching
 - d. Every Christian should be able to teach the gospel to unbelievers
 - e. What this is referring to is officially teaching in a church context,
 - f. such as preaching a sermon on Sunday
 - g. or teaching a bible study in the week
10. And if you're someone who teaches bible study during the week
11. and this verse scares you
12. then maybe you should prayerfully reconsider if you should be teaching

13. Those who are not gifted to teach are
to be scared of the seriousness of teaching
14. But for those who are gifted to teach
15. this is not something that should drive
you away
16. but to give you a holy fear and respect
of the work of teaching

x. Transition

1. So there are people who shouldn't be
teaching because they aren't gifted
 - a. aren't called
 - b. or aren't trained enough to teach.
2. There are also people who shouldn't be
teaching because they are intentionally
doing it for evil

a. False teachers

xi. Exposition

1. 2 Peter 2:1-2 says,

2. 'But false prophets also arose among the

people, just as there will also be false

teachers among you, who will secretly

introduce destructive heresies, even

denying the Master who bought them,

bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Many will follow their sensuality, and

because of them the way of the truth will

be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will

exploit you with false words; their judgment

from long ago is not idle, and their

destruction is not asleep.'

3. At the end of this statement

a. Peter notes that God has already

judged false teachers

i. past

ii. present

iii. and future from the beginning

iv. and that destruction is constantly

waiting for the

4. We already named a few false teachers last

time

5. so I want to remind the church to be

extremely careful to who you listen to and

what books you are reading

6. Take time in learning about the preacher or

author you are listening to

7. Research what they believe

8. Don't just read or listen to anyone

9. vet it, before receiving it

10. And if you're unsure, ask those in the church

a. who are discerning about these things and they can help you

11. Because not many should be teachers

b. Exposition – v.2

i. James goes on to say that 'we all stumble in many ways'.

1. Meaning that pastors are not perfect

2. The point of James going out to say not all should be teachers

a. is not to exalt pastors on a pedestal
like Catholics exalt their priests and
pope

b. But instead remind Christians that all
Christians including pastors are all
sinners

c. Pastors are not super humans

i. but regular

ii. imperfect people

iii. who are specifically tasked by God
to teach his word

ii. Moving on to the next phrase 'if anyone does
not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man,
able to bridle the whole body as well.'

1. Note how instead of giving examples of different ways we all sin

a. he only goes to one particular one

b. the tongue

c. how we use our tongue

d. In fact

e. if you were able to master this one thing

f. your speech

g. you could be sinless in all the other areas of your life

h. This is because mastering the tongue is the most difficult thing to control

c. Application

i. So how do we control the tongue?

- ii. Start by remembering that the tongue will be judged by the Lord
- iii. You might be thinking, 'I don't teach the bible, so I'm good here.'
 1. Yes, God will indeed judge pastors greater for what they say
 2. But the fact that God judges pastors greater than others
 3. still means that he judges everyone else for what they say as well
- iv. God will indeed judge everyone for what they say.
- v. Matthew 5:22 says, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his

brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell

1. Jesus will indeed send people to hell for the hateful words they use.

vi. Exposition

d. When the Pharisees said Jesus casts out demons by the power of demons

e. This was Jesus' reply

i. Matthew 5:36-37 36 But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

1. Jesus will not only judge careless word
people speak
2. but *every* careless word
3. All the millions of vile words people use will
be tallied up against them
4. for judgement on the day of the Lord

ii. So if you want to tame the tongue

iii. recognize that God judges the tongue

2. Recognize that the tongue controls the whole body (v.3-

5a)

a. What controls a car?

i. Is it the big powerful engine

ii. Is it the wheels

iii. It's nothing other than the steering wheel

iv. the thing that is far smaller than both of those things

b. What controls a person?

i. Is it the legs

1. The legs are what move the person after all

ii. Is it the brain

1. The brain controls much of the activity of the body

c. According to James it is the tongue

d. Exposition (v.3-4)

i. Earlier I gave the example of how a car is controlled entirely by the steering wheel

ii. Here James gives the same example

1. but in his more ancient context

2. To control horses

- a. people put bits on the tongue of the horses
- b. and attached the rein to the mouth
- c. This allowed the rider to control where the head of the horse goes
- d. by pulling
- e. and it's because of a tiny bit that goes on the horses' tongue

iii. Same case for a ship

- 1. where it's a small rudder
- 2. that dictates where the massive ship goes much like a car

iv. And James applies the same to the tongue Read

v.5a

1. James is saying that even though the tongue is such a small part of the body
2. it controls the entire body!

v. Now you might be thinking,

1. 'but isn't the heart what ultimately dictates everything?'

2. You are right

3. In fact, in Luke 6:45, Jesus said, 'The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.'

4. There is indeed an inseparable connection
 - a. between heart and tongue
 - b. We will discuss more later

c. but James is not denying the heart is
not involved with the tongue

d. but he is simply emphasizing the
problem of the tongue

vi. And the problem of the tongue is that it is the
hardest to control

1. and if you can control the tongue you can
control the rest of what you do with your
body

2. In that sense

a. the tongue is the steering wheel of the
human body

b. but the tongue does not literally or
physiologically control the body

e. Application

i. So think of a sinful habit that you are struggling to overcome

1. that is not specifically speech

2. And then ask yourself, 'how am I doing at controlling my tongue?'

3. Most likely you are not able to control it perfectly either

4. So if you're struggling with a certain habit

5. also seek to be able to control your tongue

6. Because if you can control your tongue

7. then controlling other habits will be easier

ii. So if you want to tame the tongue

1. recognize the power of the tongue

2. that it controls the whole body

3. Recognize the tongue has the power to burn down the world (v.5b-10a)

a. Britannica has a list of the 7 most deadliest weapons in history I'll just mention a few

i. Shock cavalry- Shock or heavy calvary was the deadliest military weapon of ancient times all the way up to the medieval time

ii. Heavily armored soldiers would ride heavily armored horses

iii. with long lances

iv. in groups of thousands

v. in a close tight formation

vi. and charge at you with full speed

vii. For hundreds of years, this was the deciding factor in every military engagement

b. Next, biological weapons – For example, mustard gas
in World War 1

i. These would create chemical burns and blisters
oozing with yellow fluid

ii. Anthrax was a more recent one

iii. when after 911 Americans received letters laced
with Anthrax from terrorists

c. And of course, nuclear weapons

i. By the way nuclear weapons and biological
weapons count as WMD or weapons of mass
destruction

d. And according to James

i. the tongue would be included in his list of
deadliest weapons

e. Exposition (v.5b-6)

i. He begins by describing the great destruction of wild fires

1. One tiny spark

2. can erupt an entire forest in flames and destroy it

3. James says that the tongue is also a fire

a. The damage the tongue makes can multiply wildly

b. Like fire

ii. He calls the tongue a world of iniquity or a world of evil

1. When we think of world

2. we think of everything in existence

3. from our the planets in our solar system all the way to the galaxies

4. James is saying we have a solar system

5. a galaxy

6. a universe

7. a world of evil in our very mouth

8. It is a system of evil that creates nothing but
more evil

iii. He says that the tongue is the one among all our
other body parts that defiles our entire body

1. You could think of far more foul parts of the
body

2. but James says it's not the ones you are
thinking of defiles the body

3. it is the tongue

iv. It is the tongue that sets our life on fire

1. And not a good fire

2. Not a party fire
3. but a flame of destruction
4. Our tongues create destruction
5. Hurting others
6. hurting ourselves
7. The tongue can destroy
 - a. Families
 - b. Marriages
 - c. Communities
 - d. Organizations
 - e. Nations
 - f. It can start a war
8. The false teachers say that there is a miracle in your mouth
 - a. They say to name it and claim it

b. James says, name it, destroy it

c. That's the reality of our tongue

v. Finally he says our tongue is set on fire by hell

1. Yes Satan was an impetus in the fall of man

in the garden

2. And what was Satan's weapon

3. Was it demonic possessions

4. Was it a nuclear bomb

5. It was his tongue

vi. So the tongue is a weapon of mass destruction

vii. But another reason why the tongue is so

destructive is because it's uncontrollable.

f. Exposition (v.7-8)

i. People have domesticated dogs

1. Cats

2. Cows

3. and horses

4. People have made zoos of lions and tiger

5. and even a few great white sharks

6. But no one can tame the tongue

g. Exposition (v.9-10)

i. Of all the great destruction the tongue has

caused

1. None is more shameful than using the

tongue

a. to slander and curse God

b. You might be thinking, 'but I don't

curse God.'

ii. Well James says, here

1. that blessing God

2. and then cursing men right after

3. who are made in the image of God is
hypocritical

4. Cursing people in a way

a. is also like cursing God because people
are made in his image

b. It is wicked

h. Illustration

i. There was a famous pastor named Mark Driscoll

1. who started a whole movement

2. and his church grew to tens of thousands

3. He was known for being crass in the pulpit

4. crudely talking about sex during sermons

5. and occasionally cursing during preaching

6. Yes in the very sermon that he uses to
praise God he also cursed

7. Well, later on

8. his entire movement and church was shut
down

9. and thousands of people who were from
the church were deeply hurt by his betrayal

10. He was abusive to his staff

11. and a control freak

12. Not a surprise from someone who
could not control his tongue

13. His tongue used to bless God but also
cursed men

14. hurt thousands and thousands of
people

15. Because he could not control his
tongue

16. He could not control his other actions

ii. As James concludes it should not be that way

i. Application

i. So church

1. now is the time to reflect on how we use
our tongue

2. Are using curse words a habit in your life?

3. What about slandering?

4. or gossip?

5. Crude sexual jokes?

6. Realize that these things are destructive

7. You may not see the destruction right away

8. But the damage is there

9. The emotional damage

10. the reputational damage

11. and all other kinds of damage that can
be done with the tongue

j. Exposition- Ephesians 5:4

i. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor
crude joking, which are out of place, but instead
let there be thanksgiving.

1. As Paul says

a. Even these inappropriate jokes

b. That seem small and harmless

c. Are unacceptable to the Lord

d. Instead we should be giving thanks to

God with our tongue

k. Application

- i. We must reflect on how we speak
- ii. because when we understand how destructive
- iii. and evil the tongue can be
- iv. we can tame it
- v. No one wants to tame a bunny
- vi. But everyone wants to immediately put a lion in
a cage
- vii. Remember how destructive the tongue can be
- viii. and you can tame it

4. Recognize that a clean tongue comes from a clean heart

(v.11-12)

- a. Everything has a source
 - i. There's a reason why you can drink the tap
water here but not in the Philippines

ii. That's because one source is cleaner than the other

b. James finally brings that same idea to the tongue

c. Exposition v.11-12

i. James makes a very simple and easy to understand illustration

1. A fountain can only produce either fresh or bitter water

2. It can't be both

ii. A fig tree can't make olives

iii. and a vine can't make figs

iv. Salt water doesn't make fresh water

v. You can't get oranges from an apple tree

vi. A clean tongue cannot come from a dirty heart

vii. So for Christians there is hope

viii. Because God has cleansed our heart

ix. we can have clean mouths

d. Exposition – Ezekiel 36:25-27

i. I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

God fixes the source!

1. God promises Christians that he will cleanse

us

a. and gives us new hearts

2. Because Christians are born again by God

a. and have a new heart

b. our tongues can also be clean

e. But on the other hand look at Matthew 15:18-20 –

Exposition

i. 18 But the things that come out of the mouth
come from the heart, and those things defile the
person. 19 For out of the heart come evil
thoughts, murders, acts of adultery, other
immoral sexual acts, thefts, false testimonies,
and slanderous statements. 20 These are the
things that defile the person; but to eat with
unwashed hands does not defile the person.”

1. Jesus was explaining to his disciples how
hypocritical the Pharisees were

2. in judging people for not washing hands

3. when eating bread which they believed

defiled the

4. But Jesus taught that it's not what one eats

that defiles them

5. but what they say

6. Because what people say comes from their

wicked hearts

f. Application

i. So in conclusion

ii. if you are a Christian hearing this today

iii. have hope in God

iv. especially if you are struggling in taming the
tongue

v. Because God has given you a clean heart

vi. you will be able to tame your tongue

vii. more and more over time

viii. Remember Proverbs such as Proverbs 17:28,

1. 28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is
considered wise; When he closes his lips, he
is considered prudent.

ix. Proverbs 10:19 When there are many words,
transgression is unavoidable, But he who
restrains his lips is wise.

x. And James 1:19-20, 19 This you know, my
beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to
hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the
anger of man does not achieve the righteousness
of God.

xi. The bible constantly teaches us

xii. that less words is better

xiii. and when we are not sure

xiv. it is best to be silent , *slow to speak*

xv. If you want to overcome gossip

xvi. do as Jesus taught in Matthew 18 and confront a
person in private if you have something against
him

xvii. rather than spreading it to other people

xviii. Memorizing scripture

xix. and praying to the Lord to help us with our
tongue is where we must start

xx. Because we can tame the tongue

1. When we recognize that a clean tongue

comes from a clean heart

g. Gospel

i. But if you look at your life

ii. and you notice that your mouth is full of

1. cursing

2. slander

3. and lies

4. Then ask yourself, 'am I really a Christian?'

5. While Christians are not perfect

6. God has given Christian clean hearts

7. and so the water that springs from a

Christian heart becomes cleaner and

cleaner over time

iii. But unbelievers will often be unable to control

their tongue

1. While it may not be the case for a rare few

2. it is often the case for the vast majority of

people

3. You hear it all over media
4. you heart it all over podcasts
5. or in public
6. People using foul language for literally no
good reason
7. Using words that bring no value
 - a. at best being useless filler words
 - b. and at worst showing their complete
lack of self control
8. And so if that is you
 - a. and you realize that you cannot control
it at all
 - b. then you must be honest with yourself
if you are even a Christian
 - c. And if you are not

- d. the good news is that God is offering
to give you a new heart
- e. to save you from your wicked sins
- f. If you believe that you are sinner that
deserves to go to hell
- g. and that the only way you can be
saved is not by earning God's favor
with good deeds
- h. but solely through the one good deed
of Jesus Christ's death on the cross and
resurrection
- i. he will save you and give you a new
heart today
- j. and a clean tongue
- k. Let's pray

