

Speaking Wisely

Exploring the Power of Words

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FISHERMAN
BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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STUDY 1

Taming the Tongue

JAMES 1:19-21,26; 3:1-12

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” Sound familiar? As children many of us believed this little ditty but later found that it wasn’t true. Harsh, mean words do hurt. They sting. They linger deep within our minds like embedded splinters. I know because, like most people, I’ve been on the receiving end of an untamed tongue.

Although you and I can’t change what others say about us, we can hold ourselves responsible for what we say. To be honest, I have to admit that as a young Christian I sometimes used words without caring if they wounded the hearer. I didn’t think about their impact or how I would feel if they were said to me. What eventually brought heart conviction and change? Reading and applying the powerful truths that James shows us in this study on taming the tongue.

1. What negative or positive words have had a lasting impact on your life?

READ JAMES 1:19-21, 26.

- ✎ 2. To whom was James speaking in these verses?

Why do you suppose he brought up this topic?

3. What reasons did James give for why Christians should tame their tongues (verses 20-26)?

4. What God-honoring principles for communication do you find in these verses?

5. Which of these principles do you find most helpful or most needed in your life? Why?

READ JAMES 3:1-12.

- ✎ 6. How did James describe the “perfect” person (verse 2)?

7. To what did James compare the tongue in verses 3 through 7?

Why are these examples and metaphors effective?

- ✎ 8. What did James name as the source of our problems with the tongue (verse 6)?
9. What do you think James meant when he said that a person's uncontrolled tongue "sets the whole course of his life on fire" (verse 6)?
- ✎ 10. Review the tongue problem addressed in verses 9 through 12. Why are praising God and cursing people incompatible for Christians?

11. In what everyday circumstances might you be provoked to curse someone?

When you are tempted to react this way, what changes in your thought patterns, attitudes, or behavior would help you resist? (See also James 1:19-20.)

Life Changes

12. Generally speaking, what strengths are evident in the way you use your tongue? What weaknesses?

13. Think about the great influence your words can have for good or ill. What steps can you take to tame your tongue and be more alert to the impact your words have on others?