



JAMES 1-3 | DEVOTED

CAREFUL

James 3.1-12



Talk About

- 1. How have you experienced words being used to bless? To curse? What was the effect upon you?*

- 2. How have you seen your words impact upon others, for good or for ill?*

- 3. What role do you see words playing in the life of your church?*



Read James 3.1-12



Explore

- 4. Why do you think that God cares about words? Why does he really care about the words spoken by those who teach in the church?*

5. *Who are the “teachers” in your church? In what ways are you a teacher?*
6. *Does James expect that anyone will (in this life) be “perfect, able to keep their whole body in check? Why, or, why not?*
7. *According to our passage, what do horses, ships and human bodies (lives) have in common?*
8. *James uses exaggeration (hyperbole) to make a point in 3.5b-8. Why should we read this as exaggeration, and so, how should we understand his point? (see Matt 5.29-30 for an example of how Jesus does this)*
9. *How does this match up with how you understand the tongue? Does your experience confirm James’ description?*

10. How does what James is teaching about how we are to use our words relate to his conclusion in James 2.26 that “faith without deeds is dead”?

11. What might inconsistency in our speech reveal?

12. Read Matt 12.32-27. How does this passage and James 3.11-12 give us hope?



Jesus in James

As in every area, Jesus is a model for us in how we use our speech. He spoke to honour God and to bless those who listened, even when the word he spoke was a word of strong rebuke. His motivation was to honour his Father, who sent him to speak everything he was commanded (John 12.49). However, Jesus can never be merely a model for us.

James writes, “My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water” (James 3.12). He is reflecting Jesus teaching where he declares to the Pharisees, “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognised by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” (Matthew 12.33-34).

It is through his death and resurrection that Jesus has made the tree “good”, giving us new birth as the Holy Spirit applies the fruit of Christ’s victory in our lives, bringing us from death to life. This is what makes it possible for us to speak words that bring blessing and life.

‘The tongue is powerful; the Spirit is more so. The tongue has great influence; the Spirit of God has more (see 1 Corinthians 4:20). The tongue sets the forest ablaze in destruction; the Spirit sets the heart ablaze unto life and victory and good. This allows us to say in the end, “All glory be to Christ!” ‘ (Rob Flood, With These Words, 2020)



Action

13. *In what areas or situations do you find you are most vulnerable to sin with what you say?*
14. *What is happening in your heart at those moments? Why do you choose to speak in that way (what are your motives)?*
15. *How does what God has done for you through the gospel (the life, death & resurrection of Jesus) address that heart issue?*
16. *From what idols (God-substitutes) do we need to repent?*
17. *What do you anticipate are some opportunities that you have to bless others by speaking words of grace?*

