

LESSON 7

UNBRIDLED POWER

JAMES 3:1–12



1 What is the most helpful, positive, or encouraging thing someone has said to you recently?

2 Words have great power. Give some examples of the damaging power of words.



Read James 3:1–12 and the following notes:

☐ 3:2, 3 ☐ 3:6 ☐ 3:8 ☐ 3:9–12

3 Why is it so difficult for us to be careful in all that we say (3:2)?

4 James compares the tongue to a bit, a rudder, and a spark. What do all of these images have in common (3:3–6)?

5 What warnings does James give about the tongue? What positive results does he mention?

6 If no person can tame the tongue, what hope is there for controlling it?



Will we ever be able to control what we say? James says that the tongue corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, is a restless evil, and cannot be tamed. Yet we should not give up trying. James indicates in 3:2–6 that Christians should work on controlling their tongue. The difficulty with the tongue is that it is connected to the heart! As Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, “For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.” A tongue problem is really a heart problem. But God specializes in heart problems, giving each Christian a new heart—one that is alive to God and sensitive to his leading. Then, as we turn from sin and learn to turn to God in faith and trust, God changes us on the inside, making us like Christ. Apart from God, no person can control the tongue, but with a new heart we can find a new strength to use our tongue to glorify God and to build up people around us.

7 How can someone praise God but still curse people?

8 What kind of damage can an uncontrolled tongue do to a family? to a marriage? to children? to a church?



9 What would you say to someone who professed faith in Christ but was either unwilling or seemingly unable to control his or her tongue?

10 What kind of rationalizations have you used for having said hurtful words?

11 Who is the best example you know of someone who has control over what he or she says? How did that person acquire that kind of self-control?

12 List some specific problems that Christians can have with what they say. Which of these do you consider the most offensive? Why?

13 Under what circumstances do you tend to speak in ways that contradict your praise on Sunday?

14 In what practical ways do believers bring their speech under God's control?

15 What kinds of support can a person find for help in this area?

16 In what ways can we use our tongues positively?

17 Of all the problems with the tongue mentioned above, choose the one that is the most obvious problem for you. With God’s help, what small battles do you think you could win in this area this week?



18 List the steps you will need to take, with God’s help, to see some immediate improvement.

A In what way will teachers be judged more strictly (3:1)? How can you help those who teach you God’s Word?

B Why isn’t the tongue problem solved when people become Christians? In what ways do you struggle with the tension between “the old person” and “the new person”?

C Is it possible for people to control themselves in every way (3:2)? Why do you think James made this statement?

D How should knowing that people are made in the image of God influence how you speak to them?

MORE
for studying
other themes
in this section