

James 3:1-12
Controlling the Tongue

Introduction

Question: Can you go a week without saying any unkind words about, or to, anybody?

One sure sign of true or worthless faith is what comes out of a person's mouth. All of us will be judged by our words, but none of us more than teachers. In James 3, he comes to his second test of pure religion, of living faith, of maturity – the use of the tongue.

James 3:1-12

1. Why does James begin his instruction on the tongue with a reference to teachers (v. 1)? Is he referring to all teaching?

2. What does James mean when he says we all stumble in many ways (v. 2)? To what is he referring when he says those who do not stumble in what they say are perfect?

3. James uses some vivid imagery to explain why controlling our tongues is the key to maturity. How is a tongue like a horse's bit or a ship's rudder (vv. 3-4)? Is he saying something different about our tongues in verse 3 than he did in verse 4 or is he saying the same thing with a different metaphor?

4. How does this ability to not stumble in what we say lead to us being able to control our whole body?

5. Verses 3-5a focuses on the positive uses of our tongues. What kinds of great things can our tongues boast?

6. Do you do this with your tongue? If so, do you do it often enough?

7. How is your tongue a world of evil (vv. 6-8)? What results can your fiery tongue produce?
8. In what ways does it corrupt the whole body?
9. Animals can be tamed because God gave man dominion over them at creation (v. 7). Why can't man tame his own tongue (v. 8)?
10. In what ways can we curse people (vv. 9-10)? Why does James say this is bad?
11. How often do you find yourself cursing people?
12. What answer do you suppose James expects for the two questions he asks in verses 11-12? What is he telling us with these illustrations?

Reflection

What specific situations can you think of that could come your way this week that will challenge your use of your tongue and how you will decide to use it?