

Why Our Words Matter So Much (Part 1) : James 3:1-18

In this lesson we are going to discuss one of the most important matters in our lives, and that is our words. Now how do we speak words? There is a very small member of our body called the tongue. As we will see in this lesson even though it is very small it can do an incredible amount of damage and ruin our testimony as a saved person if we are not very careful.

Why is the tongue so important?

In verse 2 we see that James says that if a man can avoid offending in words he is a perfect man. Remember that perfect here is not going to mean sinless, it is being used in the same sense as it is used in **Ephesians 4:11-14**. In our actions alone we are going to offend some people. Now some of these things we cannot help. For instance when we pray or read our Bible in public that will offend some lost people but there is nothing we can do about that. But we can control what we say and how we say it and this is what James is trying to say.

In verses 3-5 James gives us some examples of just how important the tongue really is. The first illustration is that of the horse being controlled by the bit that is placed in his mouth. When you consider the size and strength of a horse it is amazing that they can be controlled with just a small piece of metal placed in their mouths. The second illustration is that of a ship being turned by a very small piece called the helm. When we make these comparisons with our own tongue we see that most of the time the whole body is being controlled with the tongue.

This is where verse 5 comes in and we see how that pride is connected with this also. Most of the trouble we get into in our lives especially as a young person will start with the mouth. We boast of things that either we cannot do or that we should not do and then somebody calls our hand on what we have said and because of our pride we try and do those things and then we find ourselves in all kinds of trouble. If we had just kept our mouths shut in the first place we would not get into so much trouble.

The tongue is a fire :

In verses 5-6 we see that James says the tongue is a fire. It is also called a world of iniquity. We will talk about this last phrase first. If the tongue is called a world of iniquity then that seems to point to the fact that there is a world consisting of words. In some respects this is very true there are many ways in which words are everything. For example take books and the radio without words there would be neither. Also one could consider emails and Facebook along with phones and twittering. When we consider how much of what is out there in the world on the above things no wonder the word of God says the tongue is a world of iniquity.

If saved people would spend more time praying, witnessing, studying their bible than being worried about what somebody said on Facebook or worried about putting every little thing in their world on Facebook we could get something done for God in these last days. Below are 2 very interesting verses about talking too much.

Proverbs 10:19 “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in tils afterwards.”

Most of the time the less said the better off you are, remember out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

The tongue is also said to be a fire. A fire is very destructive and leaves a horrible mess to clean up afterwards. A good cross reference for this scripture would be **Proverbs 26:20-24**. Note the following things from this passage.

- Verse 20 (If we would stop talking the strife would cease. When we keep talking it is like adding wood to the fire.)
- Verse 21 (One of the main reasons to keep our mouth shut is because it will stir up someone else which just add to the strife.)
- Verse 22 (Many times our words will hurt way more than our actions)
- Verse 24 (This gives us a reason for people speaking evil with their lips of someone else and it also gives us the fruit of this)

In **Proverbs 18:21** we see that Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat of the fruit thereof. This is an interesting verse and it tells us that if we love death or life we will eat of the fruit of whichever one we love. But note that what we love and what we eat the fruit of is connected with our tongue and therefore our words.

Note also that in this passage (**James 3:6**) the tongue is said to defile the whole body. This is where your testimony comes in to play. Have you ever met someone and really like them. Maybe you really admired them and were fascinated by their lives. Then one day you heard them say something that they should not have said, and from that point on you have never looked at them the same way. That is how the tongue can defile the whole body.

The tongue cannot be tamed :

In verse 7-12 we see that the tongue is a member of the body which cannot be tamed. This is what makes it the most dangerous member of our body. Sometimes even though we are watching our words very close we still say something that we should not have said. This is why we should practice **Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**.

Object Lesson :

Take a tube of toothpaste or a packet of ketchup and squeeze it all out. Then ask someone to put it back in just like it was when it was brand new. It can't be done. This is just like our words once there out we can never take them back.

Why Our Words Matter So Much (Part 1) : Handout

James 3:1-18

Why does James say that the tongue is such an important member of the body?

List some examples that James uses to show how even though the tongue is a little member it can do great things.

Why does James liken the tongue to a fire?

What do we see from Proverbs 26:20-24 in regards to our words and a fire?

What do we see from Proverbs 18:21 in regards to our words?

Why is the tongue considered to be the most dangerous of our members?

What are the results of an untamed tongue?