



# Adulting

Accept

Snooze

*Expositional study on the book of James.*

*The #1 catalyst for spiritual growth is reading and reflecting on the Bible.  
Use these questions for personal study or as part of a community group experience.*

**WEEK 5 OF 7**

**10/15/2017**

**Note to Leaders:** James 3:1-12 continues the discussion of faith and works by focusing on speech, which goes hand-in-hand. Here he uses the tongue as a practical and noticeable reflection of one's faith. The gravity of the tongue is seen in Proverbs 18:21: "The tongue has the power of life and death". This week, help your group reflect on their words and how they align with scripture. Jesus states that out of the heart the mouth speaks, make sure to guide them back to reflecting on their own relationship with God, and the transformation through the word of God and the Holy Spirit.

## **Sermon Questions**

1. What stood out to you from this week's message?
2. Were there any practical things you can do to implement John's challenge for the coming week?
3. Re-read James 3:1-12. What is something that spoke to you out of this passage?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think the tongue has such control over our lives that James compares it to a bit and a rudder (vv. 3-4)?
2. Why is it so difficult to control the tongue (vv. 7-8)?
3. In what ways can the tongue poison people and relationships? (Consider what Proverbs 18:21 teaches)
4. James has focused primarily on the destructive power of the tongue. In what ways can the tongue also bring hope and healing?
5. We are commanded to guard the tongue, and yet James claims "no man can tame the tongue"? What does he mean? What is our part and what is God's part?
6. According to James, where does the root of the problem of evil speech lie? (Read also Matthew 15:11, 16-19)

7. How does the tongue reflect your spiritual growth?

What types of speech are negative indicators in spiritual growth?

What types of speech are positive indicators?

8. Take a few moments to reflect on the past week. What recent “evil” uses of the tongue are you aware of? How can you begin to “repair” the effects?
9. Apart from will power (which is necessary) what spiritual practices can help you grow spiritually and gain better control of the tongue?
10. Using James 3:1-12 and the message from this past Sunday, write down two ways you can begin avoiding sins of the tongue this next week.

#### Background Comments

The tongue is often considered the indicator of the heart, which discloses the real person. Since the tongue—speech—is so regular in daily life it is perhaps the easiest way to sin. In Scripture, the tongue is variously described as wicked, deceitful, perverse, filthy, corrupt, flattering, slanderous, gossiping, blasphemous, foolish, boasting, complaining, cursing, contentious, sensual, and vile. And that list is not exhaustive. It is not surprising then that James mentions the tongue or speech in every chapter of his letter. In James 3:1-12, the tongue is another test of living faith, because the genuineness of a person’s faith will inevitably be demonstrated by his speech. The tongue is only told what to produce by the heart, where sin originates (see James 1:14-15). James warns that no one can have full control of the tongue (be perfect), yet he holds out hope that by growing in the likeness of Christ and bearing fruit in accordance with faith we can progress in our control of the tongue—reinforcing its ability to bring life rather than death, blessing rather than cursing.

James begins with a focus on teachers, who by their profession likely speak more than others and have a greater audience. The warning comes, however, to all who speak. Final evaluation, or judgment, will take into account how they use their words. Did they spread life and truth or death and deceit? James continues by way of reminder that all make mistakes. He demonstrates the ability of mankind to control beasts and direct ships, but still fail to control a small aspect of the human body. This lack of control results in uncontrollable destruction: “a fire” that spreads rapidly. Words have a way of escaping one’s mouth before they are carefully considered, unable to be retracted and at times having unfortunate results. Thus, despite its small size it has a disproportionate impact. Verse 6 states that the tongue is a world of evil that stains the whole body. The word “stains” is the same word used in 1:27 when it talks of “true religion”. The tongue has the power to destroy “true religion” because it reflects and projects the sin within us. This sin reflects the restless evil in James 3:8. Here “restless” is the same word used in James 1:8 when it talks about the double-minded individual, unstable (restless) in all he does. The

effect is this: “The double-minded man, inconsistent in his faith, trying to please both God and the world at the same time” uses his tongue in illogical and contradictory ways. This form of speech condemns himself and curses those around him.

Matthew 15:11, 16-19 is a pivotal comparison when we reach James 3:11-12. It speaks of the spring and the fruit of the tree. In Matthew 15, Jesus highlights the source of our actions and words—the heart. Jeremiah states that heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it? Jesus seems to indicate that one way of gauging the health of your heart is by listening to your words and observing your actions. This process paired with prayer and meditation, through which the Holy Spirit reveals and convicts, can lead to transformation. However, the beginning point is humility before God. Acknowledging our sins, admitting our need for God’s grace and forgiveness, and actively conforming our lives to scripture one day at a time.

### **Prayer Requests**

Take a few minutes to go around the room and ask if anyone has something they would like prayer for. Write these down as they are being shared.

Additionally, challenge people to begin praying about the step of maturity God may be calling them to during this series.

Finally, pray together. You can pray the prayer below or your own prayer that incorporates the requests represented in the group.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, you desire a pure heart and wholesome communication. You have placed within me the power to speak life or to speak to death, to bless or to curse. This week may you reveal in me those mistakes that I make in my speech. May you empower me through prayer and quietness to speak more blessings than curses. Hold my tongue from speaking evil, slandering, gossiping, boasting, and complaining. Grant me the strength this week to glorify you with my speech and may the meditations of my heart be pleasing to you. In Jesus name I pray, amen.