



James | Faith That Works – Week 5

“Recognize the Truth of the Tongue”

James 3:1 (NIV)

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

1. The tongue carries tremendous responsibility.

James 3:2 (NIV)

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

2. Our character is measured mostly by our words.
 - Your tongue can ruin your testimony in a moment.

James 3:3-4 (NIV)

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

3. Our words determine direction.
 - Our lives follow the direction of our words.

James 3:5-6 (NIV)

Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

4. Our words will bring life or death.

Proverbs 18:21a (ESV)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue

- We need to recognize daily the deadly power of the tongue.
- We need to recognize the transformative power of the tongue.

James 3:7-8 (NIV)

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

5. We can't tame the tongue but God can transform our hearts.

Luke 6:45 (NIV)

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

- Focusing on our speech leaves us unchanged, but allowing God to reveal your heart will bring lasting change.

Look who is talking:

- Criticism on the tongue is jealousy from the heart.
- Slander/Gossip on the tongue is insecurity from the heart.
- Anger on the tongue is fear from the heart.
- Impure words on the tongue are from an unguarded heart.
- Dishonesty on the tongue is from a lack of faith in the heart.
- Hurtful words on the tongue are from festering wounds in my heart.

Tips for taming the tongue:

- Admit you need help.
- Don't excuse it.
- Confess the heart issue.
- Guard your heart.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

- Pray daily about it.

Psalm 141:3 (NIV)

Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.

- Be quick to listen.

James 1:19 (NIV)

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

- Ask the big 3: Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it holy?
- Be consistent.

James 3:9-12 (NIV)

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.