

6. Faith That Ties the Tongue (James 3:1-12)

wisdom for a blue jean faith

“From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters.” [James 3:10](#) (NET)

“Nanny, nanny, boo boo!” I don’t think I really know what that means and am not even sure those are really the words that children use to taunt one another! But I do know that they represent the power of the tongue! This week James emphasizes the power over others that our words have—a true test of ***Blue Jean Faith!*** According to James, the tongue is hardest part of the body to control!

day one study

Read [James 3:1-12](#).

1. What would you say is James’ main point in this section of his letter? Remember to look for repetition!
2. Today we will consider 3:1. What is James’ warning and how does it relate to the rest of the section?

3. What do these verses say about the place of teaching in the church?

a. [Mt. 28:18-20](#)

b. [Acts 13:1-3](#)

c. [1 Cor. 12:27-28](#)

d. [Eph. 4:11-12](#)

4. What is the message in these verses for those who are gifted to teach?

a. [Rom. 12:3-8](#)

b. [1 Cor. 12:7](#)

c. [1 Peter 4:10-11](#)

5. What warning did Paul give those who wanted to teach in [1 Tim. 1:7](#)?

How does it relate to James' warning?

Stronger Jeans (optional): Use your concordance or the NET Bible tools to find other New Testament references to teachers, teach, or teaching. Write down your insights and thoughts from these verses.

6. Sharing Questions:

How have you been influenced positively or negatively by a teacher—either in the church or even in a secular setting?

What feelings did that person bring into your life with his or her words?

7. Responding to God: Spend time thanking God for the teachers who have influenced you most and pray specifically for them to be able to control their tongues in light of their influence over others. Write down your prayer.

day two study

Reread [James 3:1-6](#).

1. What is James point about the tongue in vv. 2-5? Explain how the three illustrations relate to his point.

2. Which of the three illustrations helps you best understand his point?

How did that one illustration help?

3. James emphasizes the power of words in v. 6. Summarize his message in your own words.

4. Read [Gal. 5:19-21a](#), where Paul lists works of the flesh, in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)). Which of the works relate to our words? How?

Stronger Jeans (optional): Research horses and bits or ships and rudders to see what you learn about them that helps you understand these illustrations better.

5. *Sharing Question*: Give an example in your own life, without sharing names or identities, of a time when someone's words impacted you in the way described in [James 3:6](#).

6. *Responding to God*: Write a prayer for God to help you control your tongue so that you do not do what is described in [3:6](#).

day three study

Read [James 3:1-12](#). Today we will focus on vv. 7-12.

1. What contrast does James use to make his point in vv. 7-8?

What is the point?

2. What example of the misuse of words does James give in vv. 9-10?

Why are these two utterances incompatible in light of vv. 11-12? (I hope you are working on learning [James 3:10!](#))

3. Compare Jesus' words in [Mt. 12:33-37](#) with what James says in this passage on the tongue (3:1-12). Write down your insights.

4. What do you learn from Jesus in [Mt. 5:21-26](#) about the seriousness of your words and about dealing with the sins of the tongue?

Stronger Jeans (optional): How does [John 17](#) relate to this issue of our words against our fellow believers?

5. *Sharing Question:* Now, let's tell the truth here! Have you ever been guilty, as I have, of somehow "cursing" someone and then coming to church and blessing God? How guilty did you feel? Write down some part of that story to share with your group.

What should you have done differently in light of the Matthew passage you just read?

6. *Responding to God:* Spend time before God, asking Him to show you if there is anyone in your life to whom you need to confess your sin of "cursing" them before you come worship! Believe that God does forgive but He asks you to act to restore the relationship first. Write down your response to Him.

day four study

Read [James 3:1-12](#).

1. James has previously mentioned the tongue. What did he say about it in 1:26?

How does that verse relate to this entire section on the tongue?

2. The practical book of Proverbs has much to say about our words! Ask God to speak to you personally through these scriptures. Read them and write down the gist of the message and your insights. Note parallels to James.

a. Prov. 10:8

b. Prov. 10:11

c. Prov. 10:21

d. Prov. 11:9

e. Prov. 12:18

f. Prov. 12:25

g. Prov. 13:3

h. Prov. 16:27

i. Prov. 17:14

j. Prov. 18:7

k. Prov. 18:21

l. Prov. 26:22

3. *Sharing Questions:*

Which of the above scriptures was most meaningful to you? Why?

Did God convict you of anything that you need to change in your communication with others?

Stronger Jeans (optional): Use your previous familiarity with the scriptures to think of biblical stories that relate to the use of words. Look them up and reread them. State the specifics below:

4. *Responding to God:* Draw a picture (just do it!) of one of James' illustrations in 3:1-12. Talk to God about anything that today's lesson has surfaced in your life.

day five study

Reread [James 3:1-12](#).

1. James says that we must use self-control over our tongues (3:2, 8). Let's look at some other verses that deal with self-control. Write down your insights from each verse.

a. [1 Cor. 9:24-25](#)

b. [Gal. 5:22-23](#)

c. [2 Tim. 1:7](#)

d. [2 Tim. 3:1-3](#)

e. [2 Peter 1:5-6](#)

2. From the verses in the previous question, what would you say is the key to developing self-control in the area of the tongue? On what do you base that?

Stronger Jeans (optional): Use your study tools or a topical index or Bible to find verses that deal with the positive ways to use your tongue.

3. *Sharing Questions:*

What is the primary message that God has given you this week about your own life?

Share one thing that you intend to change about your words or your dependence on God.

4. *Responding to God:* Write a prayer or poem committing to that one thing that you shared in the sharing question.

This week's story highlights the destructive power of the tongue and the forgiveness necessary to respond as God desires. If you need to forgive someone who has hurt you with unkind words, you may want to check out the four promises of forgiveness from Peacemaker Ministries.

(<http://www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBIpH/b.1172255/apps/s/content.asp?ct=1464677>)

Carole's story

I was once had a very close friend in my church who had a leadership position in one of the ministries in the church where I was also serving as a volunteer. On this particular day she was assigned as a greeter; instead, this friend came downstairs and began to help me with my duties. I approached her and told her that I needed her to greet the people in her assigned area. At this point, she turned on me and began to call me names, etc. I was very stunned as I thought we were friends and from the things she was saying

to me, it was very obvious to me that not only did she not consider me to be a friend, she did not even like me.

I was devastated and sought counsel from godly people. One of those told me that I needed to shoulder the responsibility, die to self, and apologize to her. This was one of the most difficult things I have ever done. I went to her house and apologized for having upset her and asked her to forgive me. She said she forgave me but she continued to berate me. Over the months, I kept reading scriptures on forgiveness. I would tell God that I had forgiven her but then in my mind I would rehearse how she had wronged me and not the reverse. No matter how hard I prayed and how often I made the statement, "I choose to forgive," I got no peace on the matter. Finally about one year after the incident, I wrote her an e-mail (she no longer was speaking to me) and told her how she had hurt me and the difficulty I was having with forgiveness. I told her that I was choosing to forgive her for hurting me whether she forgave me or not and at that point, I found peace. She never responded and continued to walk past me without speaking. That was 5 years ago. I have been invited to many functions where she is present. I have chosen to be pleasant to her and to continue to pray for her.

As I went to write this story I had to search my heart again to make certain that I had truly forgiven her. I began to ask myself if I truly loved her with the love that Jesus commanded of us. I had to go back to a period of repentance until I was certain that I do love her and could in fact be friends with her again should the opportunity present itself. The interesting thing is that the day I spent this time in repentance and prayer about her for this article, I received my first Christmas card from her in a number of years. Perhaps God is working in more than one heart on this issue.

I do know that the tongue can wreck friendships and bring great pain in the process. I probably spoke more sharply to her than I should have as I was under a great deal of stress that day. I never cease to be amazed at how deeply this one shattered friendship hurt me.

