



Sermon Discussion Guide

06.29.25 Message | Scott Bates | James 3:1-12

Key Scripture (ESV):

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water”.

- James 3:1-12

Message Highlights:

1. The words we speak are a reflection of what is truly in our hearts.
 2. Our tongues are small but carry enormous potential for good or harm.
 3. You don't need more self-control—you need heart transformation.
 4. Encouraging words breathe life into people.
 5. Learning to think before we speak is an act of worship and surrender.
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CONVERSATION STARTER

What's the funniest or most awkward thing you've ever said that you instantly regretted?

DISCUSS THE MESSAGE

1. During the sermon, Scott said that our words are heart issues, not vocabulary issues. What does that mean in your everyday relationships?
 2. Scott challenged us to recognize that our words have the power to either build or break. Where have you seen that play out this week?
 3. Scott reminded us that this isn't a DIY self-help sermon. Why is that distinction important when it comes to how we use our words?
 4. During the message, Scott mentioned that words of encouragement are more powerful than we realize. Who is someone you can intentionally encourage this week?
 5. Scott shared the story about the woman who couldn't speak for six months. What does her experience teach us about slowing down before we speak?
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THINK DEEPER (Does your group understand the passage?)

1. Why do you think James starts by warning those who teach? How does that relate to the responsibility of our words? (*James 3:1*)
 2. How do the metaphors of the bit, rudder and spark help illustrate the influence of the tongue? (*James 3:3-6*)
 3. James says no human can tame the tongue. What does this tell us about our need for divine help? (*James 3:8*)
 4. Why is it so dangerous that blessing and cursing can come from the same mouth? (*James 3:9-10*)
 5. What does James mean by comparing the tongue to springs and fruit trees? What's the spiritual lesson? (*James 3:11-12*)
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THINK LIFE CHANGE (Personal implications)

1. When you reflect on your week, which conversations demonstrated a heart aligned with Jesus? Which ones did not?
 2. What patterns in your speech would you say are the hardest to change?
 3. What is one truth from this sermon that you feel the Spirit pressing on your heart?
 4. What does it look like for you to submit your speech and tone to God this week?
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THINK ENGAGE (Making a difference in your circles of influence)

1. How could your words bring hope into another's life this week?
2. Can you recall a recent conversation that you could have handled better over the past week? Based on what we are learning, how could you have handled that differently?
3. Who in your community needs to hear encouragement or affirmation from you this week?

THINK KINGDOM (Understanding the bigger picture)

1. How do our daily conversations reflect the Kingdom of God to those around us?
2. What would it mean to use your words this week as a weapon against darkness and a witness of Christ's love?