

## CCC HOW TO MANAGE YOUR MOUTH P8

### Developing a Faith That Works - Part 8 of 15

#### James 3:1-12

Today we're going to look at what James has to say about "How to Manage Your Mouth". We love to talk. There are talk shows everywhere. Everybody seems to have something to say. The average American has 30 conversations a day and you'll spend 1/5 of your life talking. In one year your conversations will fill 66 books of 800 pages a book. If you're a man you speak an average of 20,000 words a day. If you're a woman you speak 30,000 words a day. (Like the guy who was asked, "Do you resent that your wife has the last word?" He replied, "No, I'm just glad when she finally gets to it!" Then there the husband, have you ever heard of the silver spoon. We'll

when it comes to talking many guys are born with a silver foot in our mouths. Guys just seem to have this natural ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Nothing is opened more wrongly at the wrong time than our mouths.

Our mouths get us into a lot of trouble. James talks about the tongue more than anybody else in the New Testament. Every chapter in the book of James, he says something about managing your mouth. Vs2, *"We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check."* James says, if you can control your mouth, you're perfect. He's not talking about your sinless. The word "perfection" here in Greek literally means "mature, healthy". So what he is telling us is, if you can control your mouth, you're mature, your healthy in your relationship with Christ. When you go to the doctor and

say, "I'm not feeling well," what's the first thing he says, "Stick out your tongue." Your tongue reveals what's going on inside of you, not just physically but spiritually.

I want you all to remember something and I am talking to those who are Christian here... If your not that's okay... In our relationship with Christ, in our beings followers of Christ. This isn't something you obtain and then say I don't have to work on this no more I have become matured, I am healthy. Being healthy and mature is something you work on everyday... yeah you may have the knowledge in your head, but if your not surrendering everyday to God's will for your life and you have mistake your knowledge for maturity and healthiness your mistaken. It's like walking up an escalator the opposite way what happens when you don't want to climb up those steps anymore... you start heading back down from where you have come from and

the same is true in your relationship with Christ. It is a daily surrender to His will for your life.

James says one way you will know is from your tongue. You've got to learn to tame your tongue. You've got to get your tongue under control.

### **WHY MUST I WATCH WHAT I SAY?**

"Why must I do that? You think, "It's only words; I'm just kidding." "Words are significant", says James. Then he gives us three reasons we have to learn to manage our mouth. Then he gives us six illustrations, two for each of the points he made. James was a great communicator because he knows how to illustrate. The first reason he gives us on why we need to control our tongue is:

#### **1. MY TONGUE DIRECTS WHERE I GO**

It has tremendous influence over my life. It has tremendous control over my life. You want to know, where you are

headed in life. You want to know, where are you going to be ten years from now? Look at your conversation. What do you talk about the most? We shape our words and then our words shape us. James says, "*The tongue is small, it's tiny*". And because it's tiny we think it's insignificant. But it has tremendous power. v. 3 *Consider a bit in a horse's mouth*. You've got a huge stallion, 2,000-3,000 pounds, and a 95 pound jockey on his back. The jockey can control the tremendous mighty horse by a little piece of metal stuck strategically over his tongue. Likewise your tongue controls the direction of your life wherever you want to go and a little bit of a word or a phrase can influence the total direction of your life.

Then he says, "*Consider a ship*". The Queen Mary has 3 acres of recreational space. She has an anchor that's equal to the weight of ten cars. Yet a relatively small

rudder directs the huge ocean liner out in the middle of the waves and winds and seas. A little rudder keeps it on course. Our tongue is like that. Our tongue is like a rudder that steers us. Ships: "*... they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.*" My tongue directs where I go. Circle "steered". Your tongue is the steering wheel of your life. It is the guidance system. If you don't like the way you're headed right now, change the way you talk. The second reason he gives us on why we need to control our tongue is:

## **2. MY TONGUE CAN DESTROY WHAT I HAVE**

In v. 5 James gives another illustration. Imagine a beautiful forest -- tall beautiful trees everywhere. Now imagine it in one minute up in smoke, completely destroyed instantly with a little tiny match. It only takes a spark to get a fire going. In 1983 in Australia, one fire

overnight destroyed 600 miles of land, villages, livestock. All from a single match. James says that your tongue can destroy just like that. You can lose it all by your tongue. A careless camper can destroy an entire national forest overnight. A careless word can destroy a life overnight, effecting thousands of lives. Gossip is like fire. It spreads quickly and it wrecks havoc. I wonder how many people because of a careless word have destroyed their marriage, or their career, or their reputation, or the reputation of another person, or their church. The tongue not only has the power to direct where you go but also to destroy what you have... if you don't learn to control it. It's like a fire. Prov. 18:20 says, *"You have to live with the consequences of everything you say."* vs. 6 *"... it sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."* Circle "whole course". He's

saying here that words can create a chain reaction, *set the whole course*. You can say something that you didn't mean to have any harm on someone, but it can have devastating effects, devastating effects that are beyond your control. What I am saying is I can just say a few inflammatory statements and from that I can set off a chain reaction, for example... you come home from work and you're tired and grumpy and cranky. The husband walks in and yells at the wife. The wife yells at the oldest kid. The oldest kid yells at the baby sister. The baby sister goes out and kicks the dog. The dog goes and bites the cat. The cat comes in and scratches the baby. The baby bites the head off the Barbie doll. James says, *"Set on fire by hell"* itself. "All hell can broke loose" from your words. James says you've got to learn to manage your mouth, not only because it can direct where you go... but it can destroy what which you

have. You can lose your family, your kids, and your career simply by what you say. Proverbs 21:23 *"If you want to stay out of trouble be careful what you say!"*

James uses another illustration here for us. He talks about a zoo. He says, *"All kinds of animals ... have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue.* He tells you and I we can't tame our tongue. You can't tame yours and I can't tame mine. It's humanly impossible. (vs.7-8) *It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."* ) He says it's *restless*. That means it's always liable to break out at any moment. I went one time to a place called Lion Safari and there was a big sign as you drove in -- "Do not get out of your car. Do not roll down the window." Why? Those animals that look so tame, they look so peaceful could rip your head off in a second. James is saying that's who you

are if your tongue isn't surrender to Christ. You'll never know what your mouth is going to say at any moment. It's like poison. The word in Greek is literally "snake venom". The tongue is a deadly weapon. The third reason he gives us on why we need to control our tongue is:

### **3. MY TONGUE DISPLAYS WHO I AM**

It reveals my real character. It tells what's really inside of me. First James points out how inconsistent we are in our speech. He says in v. 9 *"The tongue we praise our Lord and Father and with the same tongue we curse men who've been made in God's likeness. From the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."* We say these things out of the same mouth. We come to church on Sunday. God loves for us to praise Him in music... We sing praises to the Lord in song. Then we walk out, get into the car and on the way home we argue

about where we're going to eat lunch. Isn't it amazing how quickly your attitude can change? In one minute you're saying, "Praise the Lord", the next you're saying, "Shut up!" The tongue is a strange contradiction. It's so inconsistent. It's amazing how quickly it can change, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One minute we're praising God and the next we're cursing other people. The word cursing here doesn't necessarily mean profanity. It means any kind of put down, label. "You good for nothing... You'll never amount to nothing ... You're just like ..." Any kind of put down is cursing.

This bothers me immensely. I think how is it possible that we can be loving to people we love -- our kids, wives, husbands -- and the next moment be harsh, cold and mean to them? How is it possible? How is it possible in one minute to be talking to my kids in gentle, loving tones and

the next minute I'm being mean to them? I hurt them. I say things that damage their self-esteem. How is that? I grieve over that a lot. I find myself asking forgiveness a lot in my family, especially to my kids. Do you struggle with an inconsistent tongue? James says we all have it. We speak lovingly in one breath and then lash out in the next. What gives with that? What's the problem with that..? Why do we do that? Why can we genuinely mean something in love and kindness one minute and then genuinely mean something in hate the next minute?

James gives the answer in v. 11-12. He says consider the source. *"Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water."* The point is, whatever is in the well comes out in the water. Whatever is in the tree, comes out in the

fruit. What is the likelihood of an apple tree producing cherries? Zip! My problem is not really my tongue. My problem is really, my heart. What's inside is what comes out. My mouth eventually betrays what is really on the inside of me. I can fool you and pretend but eventually my tongue is going to catch me. It's going to let you know what's really inside.

Have you heard this excuse? Someone says something really mean or hurtful and they say, "I don't know what got into me. It's not like me to say that. I don't know why I said that. It's totally out of character for me. I didn't really mean it." James say, "Yes, it is. It's just like you. Quit kidding yourself. What's inside is going to come out. You don't have a spring that one minute gives salt water and the next gives fresh water. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 *"For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."* It

reveals my true character in that season of life. **A person with a harsh tongue has an angry heart. A person with a negative tongue has a fearful heart. A person with an overactive tongue has an unsettled heart. A person with a boasting tongue has an insecure heart. A person with a filthy tongue has an impure heart. A person with a critical tongue all the time has a bitter heart.**

But in saying that I also want to share with you... a person who is always encouraging with their words... has a happy, hopeful heart. A person who speaks gently has a loving heart. A person who speaks truthfully has an honest heart.

## **II. WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?**

**1. Get a new heart** - You've got to get a new heart, that's the problem. Ezekiel 18:31 *"Rid yourself of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a*

*new spirit!"* Painting the outside of the pump doesn't make any difference if there is poison in the well. I can change the outside, I can turn over a new leaf in life, but what I really need is a new life. Why, because I can't do it myself. What I need is a fresh start. I need to let go of all the past and be born again and start over. I need to get a new heart.

How do I get a new heart? 2 Cor 5:17 *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new person. The old has passed away. Behold all things have become new."* New life, new heart, new spirit. When you come to Jesus Christ, He wipes out everything you've done in the past. He says You're starting over but this time I am in charge, you just need to follow me. We need to pray like David prayed in Psalm 51 *"Create in me a clean heart, O God"* That's one solution, another solution is:

**2. Ask God for help every day.** - You can't do it... you need supernatural power to control your tongue. You can't do it on your own. Your life is a living proof of that. You and I cannot control it on our own. We need supernatural power... so we ask God to help us. Psalm 141:3 *"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."* This is a great verse to memorize and quote every morning. *"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."* Put it on your refrigerator. What your saying is God, put a muzzle on my mouth. Guard my lips. Don't let me be critical today. Don't let me be judgmental today. Don't let me say things off the cuff that I then later will regret." You need to ask God for help daily... Why, because you need His power in your life to have success here. Getting into God's word, the bible is a part of asking God for help. As you ask Him for help you

need to read His word. Garbage in, garbage out. What goes into your mind, goes into your heart, and what goes into your heart, comes out of your mouth. Fill your mind with the word of God -- with positive things, whatsoever things that are true, etc. -- think on these things. Another solution is:

**3. Think before you speak** - Engage your mind before you put your mouth in gear. James 1:19 *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."* There's a designation here. They go in order. First be quick to listen and then slow to speak. If you're quick to listen you will be slow to speak. If you're slow to speak, then you will be slow to become angry. If you have a problem with anger you need to work on being quick to listen and slow to speak. The result will be... you'll be slow to anger.

What does your tongue say about you? What does it reveal about you? If we were to play back a tape of every conversation you've had in this past week, what would we learn about you? God hears it all, I don't but He does. Our tongues display to Him who we are. What direction is your tongue leading you? Some people say, "I'm just sick all the time" or they say, "I can never do anything", or things like, "Things are just getting tougher and tougher" – Let me ask you a question... what direction are they headed? Our tongues control the direction of our lives like a rudder or a bit.

A bit and a rudder must be under the hand of a strong arm. James is saying that the only way to get control of your tongue is let Jesus Christ have control of your heart. What's in your heart is going to come out in your mouth.

You let Christ's hand be on your bit, your rudder and let Him direct your life.

Maybe you need to ask forgiveness. Maybe you need to go to your kids to say, "I'm sorry. I'm inconsistent the way I talk to you many times. Sometimes I'm loving, sometimes I'm harsh. But I am asking you to forgive me for those times, I'm sorry. All that shows is your human. We all stumble in many ways -- all of us. Maybe you need to apologize to your wife or your husband. Maybe you need to say, "I'm not as loving to you in my speech as I ought to be. I tend to be cold and indifferent at times. I talk to you harshly. I boss everybody around. I'm inconsistent and inconsiderate." Ezekiel says, *"Get rid of all your offenses you've committed and get a new heart and a new spirit."*

**Prayer:** Every one of us today needed this message.

Because, It's a universal problem. Some people sorry to

say, never do learn to control their tongue. If you desire to change, would you pray this prayer in your heart right now with me? "God, I need a heart transplant. I need a new heart and a new spirit. Come into my life. You maybe saying this for the first time or as a recommitment just say, "Take control of my life, Lord Jesus."

Let me also ask you this... What direction is your tongue leading you? Where are you headed in life? Where will you be ten years from now? What do you talk about the most? Because, that tells me where you're headed. My tongue can destroy what I have. I could lose it all in a minute by a few careless words, just like a cigarette dropped can destroy an entire park. Maybe some of you need to say, "God, I've been a verbal arsonist. I say things that hurt. That hurt my husband, my wife, my kids. I say things at work that are unkind. I'm harshest with those I

love." The Bible says that displays what is inside. That's where the change needs to take place. "God would You give me help every day? Would You put a guard on my mouth? Would You help me to think before I speak? Lord, forgive me for the things I've said that were out of place. Help me with a new start this morning. I can't do it on my own; I need Your help. Help me to read Your Bible and fill my mind with good things." If you have an overactive tongue, say "God would You put peace in my heart so I don't have to talk so much? I've been negative. Help me not to be fearful. I tend to brag a lot. Help me to not feel insecure. God, melt the hard heart. Give me a caring, loving heart. Jesus Christ, take control of the rudder of my life and guide me in the direction that You wish."

If you prayed that prayer, God heard you. Father, we all need this message. I pray that we all learn to manage our mouth. Help us, we can't do it on our own. But by Your spirit in our lives we can have victory. Lord, we realize that our tongue can damage but it also can delight. What a great potential we have. Help us to use our mouths, our tongues to bless people. God, help me to use my tongue to bless my wife, to bless my children, to bless the people I work with. God, there is tremendous potential in it. Help my tongue to give light and warmth rather than destruction. In Jesus' name. Amen.