

Taming the tongue

Bible Study – Submitted by Capt. Charleen Morrow

Text: James 3:1-12

Introduction:

Think about the wide variety of comments and connections you make daily. The average person speaks about 7,000 words spoken a day, makes about 12 social interactions daily, and according to a Stanford study, has about 6000 individual thoughts daily. If we take a day and examine all of our words spoken and thoughts to ourselves, would you be proud of everything you've done? Would God be pleased? Could you say that you have "tamed the tongue" (physical or mental) in those situations? How many times would that tongue have gotten you into trouble? We all have trouble taming our tongue. James talks about this in James 3:1-12. The same mind and tongue that prays to the heavenly Father, thinks the thoughts of others around us and of ourselves. In this study we are going to look at taming our tongue with others and taming our tongue with ourselves.

Taming the tongue with others:

When working with young children, we often find that they will say whatever comes to mind, even to the embarrassment of their parents or other adults in the room. Often, children do not have a "filter," as they say. Young minds are still learning the "dos and don'ts" of social norms and have a hard time controlling what comes from their mouths. Sometimes, we adults act the very same way. Taming our tongue is an important theme in scripture. With our tongues we

can build people up, tear people down, or say the wrong thing without meaning it. How we speak and how we act toward others, fellow believer or not, is a direct representation of who our heavenly Father is and what he is about. When we look at our text in James, let's discuss these questions:

Read James 3:1-8 **3** "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. **2** 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.

3 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. **5** 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.

7 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."

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think James means when he says the tongue is also like fire?
- How can a small "rudder" like the tongue control my being?
- How can I control the power of my tongue?

- What does it mean to “tame the tongue” with others and what are some ways that we can practice “taming the tongue”?
- Look up scriptures: Proverbs 15:4, Colossians 3:12 and Galatians 5:13. Discuss with each other how these scriptures relate to learning to tame the tongue with others.

Jesus discusses this in the book of Matthew when preaching the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:12 says “¹² So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Earlier in James we are also reminded to be “quick to listen and slow to speak”. The next time you want to speak without thinking, take three deep breaths or count to 5 slowly in your head.

Or, you can come up with your own tool to use to ensure the next words out of your mouth will be glorifying to God.

Taming the tongue with ourselves:

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive”.

This is a quote by the Dalai Lama. This concept may be easy to practice with others. For many of us, it is easy to love others and treat others with compassion but, do we offer ourselves the same kindness? We are our own worst critics, however; we are still children of the almighty God! So many of us talk to ourselves and use words and thoughts that we wouldn’t dare say to another person. I’m too much of....., I will never be....., I will never look like....., I will never succeed like...., I’M NOT ENOUGH! But we are God’s children. God’s Chosen. Created in HIS image. As we dive back into our passage in James chapter 3, Let’s read verses 9-12. “⁹ 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 saltwater 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."

Let's insert ourselves into the passage in James. "With the tongue we praise our Lord, and with it we curse human beings," and how about "and with it we curse ourselves, who have been made in God's likeness". Or, we can make it even more personal: "And with it we curse _____ (your first and last name), who have been made in God's likeness".

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think the definition of "self-talk" is and how does that relate to taming the tongue within us?
- What does "Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same spring?" mean?
- Why do you think it can be easier to praise and uplift others and not provide the same love and affection for ourselves?
- Look up scriptures: Ephesians 4:29-30, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, and Philippians 4:8-9. Have a conversation about how these scripture verses provide evidence that God wants us to "tame the tongue" when speaking to ourselves.

Positive self-talk is not a new concept. Treating our body as a temple of the Lord includes our minds as well. Just as we would not want to clutter our minds and hearts with other sins and admirations of the world, we should also not clutter them with thoughts that berate a child of God. Galatians 4:7 says: "Therefore you are no longer a

slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God". The next time you want to hurt yourself with negative words and thoughts, remember whose you are and tame that tongue!

Final discussion questions:

Just like with anything worth doing, taming the tongue requires practice, practice, practice!

- What are some ways we can practice taming the tongue to others?
- What are strategies we can use to keep ourselves from being "quick to speak"?
- What are some ways we can practice taming our tongue with ourselves?
- Do you think there is a correlation between how we view/talk to ourselves and how we view/talk to others?