



Pointers and questions on the book of
James

Session 5

3:1-12

Taming the Tongue

Summary

- 3:1-2** Some Christians want the prominence of being public teachers in the church. This is a spoken ministry, carrying enormous responsibility, and God will judge teachers 'more strictly'. Only those who can control their tongue need apply!
- 3:3-6** The tongue has immense power—out of all proportion to its size. In this respect it is like the bit in a horse's mouth, the rudder of a big ship or a tiny spark in a dry forest.
- 3:7-12** Keeping our tongue (speech) in check is a lifelong job. We run the constant risk of being 'forked-tongued'—on the one hand using our speech to praise God and, on the other, using it to pull other people down. We need to make up our mind what kind of talk we want to come from our mouths and concentrate on keeping it that way.

Questions to get you thinking

1. What would you consider wrong motives for wanting to be a teacher in the church? (v1)
2. And what would be the right motives? (v1)
3. Why should God judge teachers more strictly? (v1)
4. We are all liable to speak in unhelpful ways from time to time: angrily, cynically, flatteringly, critically etc. What is your own particular weakness in this area?
5. Are you still smarting from cruel words spoken to you maybe years ago by parents or others? If so, tell the group about it, actively forgive that person, then ask the group to pray for you to put it behind you once for all.
6. Talk about the three illustrations of the tongue's power in v3-6. Are they good illustrations, or are they a bit exaggerated, do you think?
7. Could there be any connection between the tongue as the most difficult member to tame and the fact that, when a person receives the Holy Spirit, they normally begin to speak in tongues?
8. What do you think 'set on fire by hell' means? (v6)
9. If somebody who knows you well was asked to describe the quality of your talk, what would they be likely to say if they were really honest?

