

JAMES

Faith on Display in Your Conversations // James 3:1-5a,9-10,13-18

THE POINT: When you rely on God, your words reflect His character.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Gossip means specifically to reveal secrets or to spread scandalous information. It's not wrong to talk about people, as long as we're lifting them up to others. However, when we say things that are unflattering or that tear them down, we're acting as gossips and our words have serious consequences. Most of the time people do not hear what is being said about them. But what if they did?

► **When have your words gotten you in trouble?**

JAMES 3:1-5a

James used the examples of horses and ships to illustrate how they are controlled by very small devices. A bridle bit weighs a pound or so, yet a rider uses it to guide an 1,800-pound horse. A rudder is very small compared to the ship, yet the captain uses it to steer the entire vessel. In the same way, though "the tongue is a small part of the body" (James 3:5), it is very powerful in its effect—for good or bad. Harsh words or untrue words can destroy others just as a small spark can start a wildfire that destroys a large forest. We've surely all experienced the effects of harsh or careless words. Like James, Paul also challenged his readers to use their words carefully, avoiding the use of "obscene and foolish talking or crude joking" (Eph. 5:4). Words are very powerful. Let's make sure we use them in the right ways.

► **When has a sensitive situation forced you to choose your words carefully?**

► **What are some of the consequences of an uncontrolled tongue?**

JAMES 3:9-10

The tongue can be used for good or evil, and James pointed out just how inconsistent we can be with our words. At times, we use our tongues to bless God, but at other times, we speak unkindly or hurtfully to people created in His image. This teaching can be discouraging, or even seem hopeless. After all, many people have felt the guilt of having hurt someone with their words and promised never to do it again. But before they know what's happened, the old bad habit pops up and harsh words come out. However, James's point is not that the situation is hopeless. Rather, because our tongues are tempted toward evil, we must continually be on guard, paying attention to every word we say. Relying only on our own self-control is not the answer. The only way we can use our tongue consistently for God's good purposes is to submit to God's control in our lives. When we live by the Spirit, which means He will be the source of our words, the things we say will always serve to build others up and point people to Jesus.

► **Why is inconsistency in the ways we use our words such a big deal?**

► **What effect has technology had on the way we use our words?**

JAMES 3:13-18

Heavenly wisdom is different. Instead of thinking first of self, it's set on blessing others. And because true wisdom believes the truth about Jesus, it moves people to live in the ways that Jesus lived. If we live selfishly, then we're living according to the "demonic" wisdom of the world. This fails to honor Jesus and will ultimately lead to the unwise being cut off from God's blessings. However, when we pursue true wisdom, God will enable us to speak in ways that build others up and live in ways that reflect the goodness of Christ. Let's live by the wisdom from above in all we say and do.

► **Why is gentleness so important?**

► **How can we evaluate whether or not our words and actions reflect God's character?**



LIVE IT OUT

Unit 1 // Session 4

> CHRIST

- > **Memorize Philippians 4:8 so that you can recall it when you are tempted to gossip or make sarcastic remarks. Begin by writing it below:**

> COMMUNITY

The church is to be known by the unity that exists among its members. There are few things that damage unity more than gossip. Make it a point never to speak negatively about others in your church (or anyone for that matter). Instead, choose to speak well of others.

- > **This week, share with three friends something specific you really appreciate about them.**

> CULTURE

You might have heard the quote, “Preach the gospel at all times, and, if necessary, use words.” This is a nice sentiment—our lives are to be living pictures of the gospel. However, we must realize that words are necessary. Understand these things:

- > When Christians use words that tear down, we will turn people away from Jesus.
 - > When we speak positively and display unity within the church, people are drawn to Jesus.
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- > **This week, choose to display unity to your non-believing friends. Choose to share the gospel, not only through your life, but through your words.**