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James 3

“Ten Marks of Maturity” Part 3

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Have you ever said something that you later regretted saying? Have you ever wished you had said something that you later regretted not saying? Words really do matter. It matters what you say and how you say it. It matters whether you speak it, text it, talk it or Tweet it.

Words matter so much that Jesus, in [Matthew 12:34-47](#), said: *“...For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”* The ultimate acquittal with our words is when we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; and we can be assured of the Lord’s forgiveness, because the Bible says that there is *“no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*¹

It’s important to remember that God is listening to and recording our conversations. In fact, Jesus said that *“[t]here is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”*² So, it’s no wonder that James, Jesus’ half-brother, would write such a strong imperative concerning our tongue.

In this study we’ll learn about controlling our tongue and exercising wisdom from above.

¹ [Romans 8:1](#)
² [Luke 12:2-3](#)

Control Your Tongue

1. **James 1:19** is the first reference to the tongue.
 - a. *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...”*
2. Someone has said that since God gave us two ears and one mouth, we should listen twice as much as we talk.
3. “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open one’s mouth and remove all doubt.” – Abraham Lincoln³
4. “Even a fish wouldn’t get into trouble if he kept his mouth shut.” – Author Unknown
5. “Talk low, talk slow and don’t say too much.” – John Wayne⁴
6. **James 1:26** – *“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.”*
7. The tongue has the potential to control.
 - a. If you can control your tongue, then you can control the rest of your body. (**James 3:2-4**)
 - b. James says that if a little thing like a bit controls a horse and a little thing like a rudder controls a ship, then a little thing like the tongue can control your whole body.
 - c. If you can get your mouth in check, you can gain control over other areas of your life, but it starts with the tongue.
 - d. **Proverbs 13:3** – *“He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”*
 - e. Notice, however, that **James 3:8** says that *“no man can tame the tongue,”* but God can, so we need to call on the Holy Spirit for help.
 - f. **Psalms 141:3** – *“Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.”*
8. The tongue has the potential to corrupt.
 - a. Just like a small spark can cause a raging forest fire, the smallest thing said can cause horrible, devastating results.
 - b. After all, how many good reputations have been ruined because of gossip or slander or false testimony?

³ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/fool.html>

⁴ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/johnwayne100060.html>

- c. A person can spend a lifetime trying to get back his or her good name, but how do you defend yourself against lies?
 - d. **James 4:11-12** - *“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”*
 - e. **1 Peter 3:10** - *“For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.’ ”*
 - f. **Proverbs 4:24** - *“Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.”*
9. The tongue has the potential to contradict.
- a. Don’t praise God and curse men with the same tongue.
 - b. Get rid of slander, sarcasm, criticism, gossip, insulting, lying, berating, cursing, manipulating and deceiving.
 - c. Use your mouth to praise, encourage, inspire, warm, advise, teach, love, comfort, bless and affirm.
 - d. **Ephesians 4:29** - *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*

Exercise Wisdom From Above

10. James has a few things to say about wisdom, and he differentiates between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom.
11. Knowledge is the accumulation of information; wisdom is the application of knowledge, and for that, we need God’s impartation.
12. James writes that earthly wisdom is when people are wise in their own eyes, and the fruit of that kind of wisdom is “envy” and “selfish ambition.” (**James 3:14**)
13. This kind of wisdom is “unspiritual and of the devil.” (**James 3:15**)
14. The person who lives by earthly wisdom is someone who is never content, insatiable, covetous, and always trying to get ahead at the expense of other people.

15. Heavenly wisdom, on the other hand, is evident in the life of a Christian because the fruit is easy to see.
 - a. Heavenly wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, full of good fruit, impartial and sincere.
16. God is just as concerned about the journey as he is about the destination.
 - a. *How you live, how you achieve, how you relate to people along the way is more important to God than just getting there.*
17. [Isaiah 5:21](#) - *“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”*
18. God is not impressed when people are clever, deceptive and manipulative as they inch their way toward success, even though people may marvel at the end result.
19. [Proverbs 4:7](#) - *“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”*
20. Real wisdom will manifest itself in the life of a Believer with eight qualities, including”

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [James 3](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Read and discuss [Matthew 12:34-47](#).
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they’ve had regarding times they’ve said: “What I’m about to tell you is a secret, so don’t tell anyone.”
 - a. What happened when the “secret” got out?
 - b. What did you learn from this experience?
5. Do you think new communication tools like IM, Twitter, and Facebook have created problems for people who have not placed a high priority on guarding their mouth and their words?
6. Read and discuss [Luke 12:2-3](#).

7. How have you practiced the old saying: "Pray it before you say it."
8. Read and discuss [Psalm 141:3](#) and [Proverbs 13:3](#).
 - a. You may want to share several quotes to jumpstart the conversation. (See 2-5 above)
9. Allow the people in your group to share examples of times when they've asked God for wisdom about a certain situation, etc.
 - a. Share Pastor Gary's definition of heavenly wisdom and discuss what that would look like in the life of a Christian. (See #15a above)
 - b. How did the Lord's wisdom help you?
 - c. Have there been times when you weren't patient enough to wait for God's wisdom and you made a decision that put you in a difficult situation?
10. Do you know people who are wise as far as the world is concerned?
 - a. Are they content or are they covetous, restless, never content and always trying to get ahead at the expense of others?
11. Close your time with prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person understand the value of keeping their tongue under control; (have someone ready to read [Psalm 141:3](#)) memorize this verse so they would be intentional about their desire for the Lord to be in control over what they say; replace a critical tongue with an affirming tongue, lying lips with truthful lips, to speak words of praise, encouragement and inspiration; that realize they need to ask God for wisdom, so that they may live a contented life, pursuing righteousness and holiness.