

Stick Out Your Tongue

Scripture: James 3:1-12

I. You need to control your tongue because it is powerful.

A. True faith in Jesus must produce good works (James 2:17). Some Christians use their tongues to do the good work of teaching the people in the church (vs. 1). But God will judge teachers strictly because teachers can either do great good or great harm with their words. If you control your tongue, you are perfect (vs. 2) in the sense that you are spiritually mature. Even though the tongue is small (vs. 5), it is powerful enough that it can be compared to a large horse (vs. 3), ship (vs. 4), or forest fire (vs. 5).

II. You need to control your tongue because it is destructive.

A. The destructive power of the tongue is seen in vs. 5-6. It is as powerful as some of those recent forest fires in California that have destroyed acres of trees and homes. James says in vs. 6 that the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. All the evil of the world is found and expressed and localized in one little part of our body: the tongue! Christians should use their tongues to build people up, not to tear people down. When we use our tongues to destroy, the source of that destruction is hell and Satan (vs. 6).

III. You need to control your tongue because only God can do it.

A. In vs. 7 James writes about all the animals human beings have been able to tame. “But no human being can tame the tongue” (vs. 8). The only one powerful enough to tame our tongues is God. If we humble ourselves before God (James 4:10) and admit our inability to control our tongues, the Holy Spirit helps us. God gets the glory when you control your untamable tongue. When you fail to control your tongue, confess your sin to God, ask for His forgiveness, and believe the promise of 1 John 1:9: **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

IV. You need to control your tongue because it is revealing.

A. In vs. 9-10 James points out the inconsistency of our tongues. Be consistent, James writes. Bless both God and people. Jesus says the source of your words is your heart. See Matthew 12:33-35. God can give you a new heart. In Ezekiel 36:26 we read God promise what He would give with the new covenant, **“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”** Ask God for a new heart that will reveal a changed heart so you can speak good words.

Application:

Examine your tongue to see if it is under God’s control.

Sources:

The Bible

Commentaries by Daniel Doriani, Douglas Moo, and Dan G. McCartney.

Sermon Outline Questions

1) Even though the tongue is small, how much power does it possess (vs. 3-5)? What do our tongues reveal about our spiritual condition?

2) How destructive can the tongue be? What is the source of this destruction (vs. 6)? If no human being can control the tongue (vs. 8), how is it possible for us to control it? Who receives the glory when a Christian controls their tongue?

3) What is the source of the words that come out of our mouths? What do our words reveal about our hearts?