

The Letter of James

Faith that works!

Study 7 – Taming the tongue

Introduction

“Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never harm me” – a childhood ditty developed to overcome playground hurts, but hardly a true maxim for life. For the simple truth is that while most of us recover from physical bumps and bruises, all of us carry the scars of harsh and cruel words. And for some of us those scars run very deep indeed, shaping our very sense of self, even destroying our sense of self-worth. The point is simple and of the utmost importance – how we speak to and about one-another matters. Words matter to people and they matter to God.

It is because words matter to people and to God that the Bible has a lot to say about our words. Throughout its pages we are urged to number our words (Ecclesiastes 5:2), to measure the truth of our words (Deuteronomy 5:20) and to use our words for good, both within the world (Colossians 4:6) and within the church (Ephesians 4:29). And it is because words matter to people and to God that James urges his readers to keep a tight rein on the tongue and with God’s help to tame the tongue. It is a message that each of us needs not only to hear but to take to heart.

Read James 3:1-12



Investigate

1. To whom is James primarily directing his teaching in this passage? (3:1)

2. What must those who presume to teach others always remember?

Apply



In what way has this passage challenged your thinking?



In what way has this passage spoken to your heart and exposed hidden sins?



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this passage?