



JAMES—A STUDY (PART SIX)  
CHAPTER 3

PETER BELLINGHAM 9 SEPTEMBER 2007

This is the sixth in a series of messages on the book of James. The previous messages can be found on our “Messages” page at [www.thewellhonduras.org](http://www.thewellhonduras.org)

**H**ow do you talk to your wife or your husband? How do you talk to your children or your parents? How do you talk to your work colleagues? How do you talk to God? How do you talk to yourself? And how do you talk to all these people not just when things are easy but when you are going through tough times? What kind of words do you use? What tone do you use? What do you say that you should not, and what do you not say that you should?

Our Christianity is supposed to affect our whole life – every single detail of it, including the words we speak and the way we speak them. And as we see in this passage, the tongue has extraordinary power. **Words have the power to achieve massive good, and they have the power to cause incredible damage.** As wise king Solomon wrote, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*” (Proverbs 18:21) We must learn to be masters of our tongues.

Words are tiny things. They have no substance in themselves: you can’t grasp or hold them. They are spoken and they seem to disappear into the air. But they do not disappear. Their effects are enormous and permanent; building lives or destroying them.

That’s why the passage begins advising us that not many should want to become teachers in the church. What do teachers do? They speak. They utter words. And those words have tremendous impact in the lives of the hearers. What a responsibility, knowing that your words and your example are literally shaping the lives of those listening to you.

The same applies to parents. Your example and your words shape the lives of your children. In fact the same applies to everyone. Think of your peer group, at work, at college, your friends and relatives. Believe it or not, your example and your words have an effect in their lives. **How will you use the influence you have?** For good or evil? To build up or to destroy? It begins and ends with your words.

Words are powerful. Jesus Christ is remembered primarily for the things He said. Granted, as believers, we know Him to the living, breathing Son of God, whose power has set us free and transformed our lives. But most unbelievers acknowledge that He was a great man, and they claim that based on nothing more than the words He spoke.

When God speaks, His words create. How did He create the world? “And God said, ‘Let there be Light.’... And God said, ‘Let there be space between the waters...’ And God said, ‘Let bright lights appear in the sky...’ And God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds...’ And God said ‘Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal...’ Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image...’” (Genesis 1) God spoke words. And the words became realities.

When God speaks something to us, His words themselves contain the power to change and transform us as we humbly accept them. *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.* (John 6:63)

WHAT DO YOU  
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AND WHAT DO  
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We are made in God's image. Hence just as God's words have power to create or destroy; ours do also. Think of the massive influence that songwriters, movie stars, media figures, politicians and religious leaders have in the lives of people. And they only have that influence because they are saying something to people, something that those people somehow identify with. They have that influence because of their words. Now think of your peer group. Your circle of influence. Your family. What you say will either build up or destroy others' lives- and your own.

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Think of the destruction caused by an untamed tongue. By gossip. By complaining. By lying. By manipulating. By bragging and exaggerating. By flattering. By putting others down. A few words spoken in anger, spoken to hurt, can cause immense damage in a relationship that took years to build. Just like a small spark can set in motion a massive fire that destroys land, homes and lives. If we choose to continue in the habit of harming others by our words, we will destroy our own souls. As Jesus said, *All those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.* (Matthew 26:52 NASB)

Our words reflect what is in our heart. Tame your heart and your words will follow. *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.* (Luke 6:45 KJV) If you have become a Christian, you have a new, pure, clean heart, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. That is the first step in taming your tongue. But you still have work to do, because God does not give you the whole land of your life in one go. When the people of Israel began to take the Promised Land, God said to them about their enemies, *I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you.* (Exodus 23:29) It's the same with our lives, as Jesus said, *In your patience possess ye your souls.* (Luke 21:19) We learn to discipline our tongue so that it speaks in line with our new life in Christ, with the wisdom from above that God has placed in us. And in the process, as we learn to tame our tongue even in trying situations, we become stronger and more mature in Christ; we develop perseverance and proven character. Instead of experiencing *disorder and every kind of evil* (James 3:16 NLT), we will *plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness* (James 3:18 NLT)

*People can tame all kinds of animals and birds and reptiles and fish, but no-one can tame the tongue...* (James 3:7-8 NLT) Alone, we cannot tame our tongue any more than we can tame our heart on our own. But the **Spirit of God lives within us, and as we submit to His teaching, we can tame both our heart and our tongue.** It's not easy. This week I watched the late Steve Irwin on television, capturing a crocodile in order to move it from one lake to another. It was very, very difficult. Even with three grown men lying on top of it, that crocodile was writhing and thrashing and wriggling. Needless to say, it didn't want to be captured. All its life it had been free to come and go as it pleased. And these men were just capturing it, let alone taming it. The tongue is the same. It doesn't want to submit to anyone, it wants to be free. *The tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction...* (James 3:6 NLT) But just like a wild horse, once tamed, can become an incredibly loyal, friendly and useful companion; so the tongue and the words it speaks can become a massive force for good in our lives.

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.* (Proverbs 18:21) **It is very important how you speak about yourself.** We have spent much time looking at who we are in God: completely forgiven, fully pleasing to Him, totally accepted by Him, deeply loved and complete in Jesus. When you make mistakes or things go wrong in your life, you may find yourself speaking ill of yourself. "Oh I'm just no good. I'm always failing. I'll never get it right. God must hate me or at least be fed up with me. I'm just a waste of time." Don't talk like that to yourself. Speak the truth to yourself. "I have failed, but I'm still deeply loved and fully accepted by God." **You will literally eat the fruit of your words.** Parents, when you're tempted to fly off the handle at your children and speak things to them you will later regret, remember to correct their actions but not tear them down or insult them as people. This is all part of taming the tongue. Children, look for ways to build your parents up with the things you say, instead of constantly complaining and moaning. There is tremendous power in our words.

As we have seen, the book of James is all framed in the context of trials. And it's during trials that we are perhaps most tempted to snap at someone we love, or to accuse God of wrongdoing. **When you are most under pressure, that is ideal opportunity you have to tame your tongue, and to choose to use it to build up and not to destroy.** When you come home late from a hard day at work and are tired, and your wife and kids want some attention, tame your tongue. Don't speak harshly to them. Speak lovingly. When as a wife you are tired from your days work, and your husband comes home and wants his dinner and this and that done, don't launch into a list of complaints. Instead, build him up with your words. Parents, do the same with your children. They are human beings too, with feelings and needs. Children, do the same with your parents. They, believe it or not, are also human beings with feelings and needs.

And when things are tight financially, and you don't know how you will pay your bills, or you're struggling with a health issue, or there are problems at work, or your questions are not answered and your prayers also seem to go unheard, or you're just having a bad day; whatever the trial may be, speak kindly of God and to God. Don't accuse Him of wrongdoing. He knows what He's doing and He loves you. Speak words of trust and faith. If necessary, be honest about the confusion and impossibility that you feel. But don't stop there. **Honesty without truth is narcissistic.** Let the Holy Spirit speak His truth to you, and let that truth indwell your heart and your words. God is with you and loves you. All things will work together for good. Thus, as God instructed Jeremiah, you will be able to separate the precious from the vile, and you will become His spokesman (see Jeremiah 15:15-19.) It starts in your own heart and life, then in your family, and then God can and will use you further afield to demonstrate His pure and powerful wisdom.

*And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! (James 3:10 NLT) No, it is not right. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. 340 generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matt 12:33-34) If you are in Christ, you are not evil; you are not a viper; you can speak good things. Because your tree has been made good. Now you need to discipline your spiritual life, taming your tongue so that cursing no longer comes from your mouth, only blessing, so that the tree of your life might produce good fruit. Make the tree good, then cultivate your walk with God.*

I think we have some repenting to do. Go back to the questions I asked at the beginning. How do you talk to your loved ones, especially when you are in a trial? How do you talk about yourself? How do you talk about God? Be honest and look at it. **Then take practical steps to tame your tongue. To not say what you should not say; and to say what you should say.** It will not be easy at first but with the help of the Holy Spirit, step by step your tongue can become an agent of the new life, the glorious, liberating, creative new life that lives within you. Amen.

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK"- JESUS  
(JOHN 7:37)