

Mouths and Matches

James 3:1-12

📖 Matthew 12:36 (NIV84) “...men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”

My mouth can direct my course.

📖 James 3:1–2 (NIV) “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.”

📖 James 3:3–5a (NIV) “When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.”

1. When controlled, my mouth can carry me places.

2. When steered, my mouth can navigate rough waters. Boat pics

📖 Proverbs 13:3 (GNB) “Be careful what you say and protect your life. A careless talker destroys himself.”

My mouth could destroy my community.

1. A fire can be accidental, or it can be intentional.

📖 James 3:5b–6 (NIV) “Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

📖 Matthew 12:34 (NIV84) “...out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”

2. A tongue cannot be tamed, but it can be restrained.

📖 James 3:7–8 (NIV) “All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

📖 James 1:26 (NIV) “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”

My mouth will disclose my character.

📖 James 3:9–12 (NIV) “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth

come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

1. A bridled tongue does not speak unkind words.

📖 James 3:9–10 (NIV84) With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

📖 Colossians 4:6 (NIV84) “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

📖 Ephesians 4:29 (NIV84) “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.”

📖 1 Peter 3:10 (NIV84) “...Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.”

2. A bridled tongue does not gripe or complain.

📖 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NIV84) “Be joyful always; ¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

📖 1 Corinthians 10:10 (NIV84) “...do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.”

3. A bridled tongue does not fail to praise.

📖 Philippians 4:4 (NIV84) “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

📖 Acts 16:25 (NIV84) “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”

📖 Psalm 34:1 (NET) “I will praise the Lord at all times; my mouth will continually praise Him.”

Digging Deeper: What has your tongue revealed about your heart this week? Did you say something you wish you hadn’t, or were you the recipient of reckless words? How did that make you feel? We all stumble and say things we regret. What can you do to make it right? Do you need to apologize or offer forgiveness? What is Jesus telling you to do?