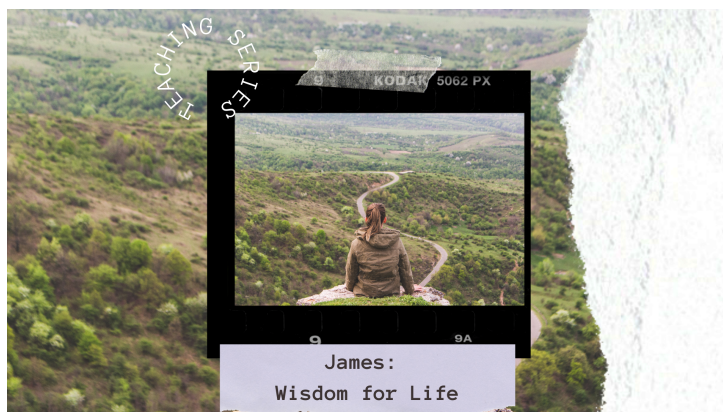


#3 – JAMES 3: TAMING THE TONGUE (Bill Cahusac)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?



James 3:1-6 (Please read verses 1-18)

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 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. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

It is all too easy, especially when we are frustrated or tired, to say things that hurt people. It can be the throwaway lines spoken to those close to us that hurt the most. Hurtful words can stick in our minds and haunt us for years. **Proverbs 18:21** says, 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue', although the NIV flips the Hebrew word order – probably because it sounds more positive to say, 'The tongue has the power of life and death'. From today's reading, I think James would agree that death comes first. We all have a negativity bias – we remember the negative words much more than the positive ones.

- *Do you remember the last time someone said something that hurt you?*
- *Do you think they meant to hurt, or were they being careless with their words? Can we be overly sensitive?*
- *What have you said that has hurt other people?*
- *Has anyone ever said to you (it usually happens in church), 'I want to say this in love, but...'? How did that feel?*
- *How do we 'speak the truth in love' in a way that really is loving and not just a way of weaponizing the truth (or at least the truth as we see it)?*
- *Why do you think James uses the metaphors of the bit in a horse's mouth, a ship's rudder, and a flame?*
- *Have you ever said (or perhaps tweeted) something which started a 'fire' that got out of control? Or, can you think of an example where that has happened?*

Our words really do matter. The psalmist prays, 'Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.' (**Psalm 141:3**). Paul writes, '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.' (**Ephesians 4:29**)

- *How do we overcome our natural negativity bias and learn to hear the positive instead of just the negative in the words people say to us – especially when they really are trying to give useful feedback?*
- *How do we train our tongues only to speak words which bring LIFE to other people – to help and build them up, doing only good? Is that even possible?*
- *How do we use social media as a force for good? Are there positive steps that have worked for you?*
- *How do we avoid gossip?¹ Why can it be so destructive? Is gossip ever a good thing?*

¹ The Cambridge Online Dictionary suggests that it is, 'conversation or reports about other people's private lives that might be unkind, disapproving, or not true.'