

Bible Studies for Life: September 25

*Faith on Display in Your Conversations • James 3:1-5a, 9-10,
13-18*

By Laura Lee Leathers



Leathers

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For Christ-followers, our foundation of words comes from The Word (John 1:1). In the beginning, God created the world by speaking it into existence (Genesis 1), “He said.” Review the times God spoke; for example, He spoke to Abraham, and Moses. Jesus spoke to Saul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-9). He always speaks through His written Word.

So far, “James has explained to us two characteristics of the mature Christian: he is patient in trouble (James 1), and he practices the truth (James 2). In this section, he shares the third characteristic of the mature believer: He has power over his tongue” (Wiersbe, Be Mature, Growing Up in Christ).

Have you ever wondered if James spoke sinful words to his half-brother, Jesus? Yes, he did because he was a sinner but his words changed once he repented and believed in the Lord

Jesus. God works through our personal experiences to give insight and help us better understand the consequences of our words – either life or death (Proverbs 18:21).

There is power in our words (James 3:1-5a ESV). As the leader of the Jerusalem church, James warns the mature believers there is a tremendous responsibility for those who teach God's Word and not everyone should desire to teach.

A pastor is responsible for teaching God's Word. There are also those who have the spiritual gift of teaching. Whatever role, God gives a strict and sobering warning: whoever teaches is held to a "stricter judgment," a sobering statement.

What about those who aren't in the official leadership roles in the church? Jesus stated in Matthew 12:36-37 that everyone will give an account for their words on the day of judgment. Individuals will either be justified or condemned (NKJV).

Notice the metaphors in these verses such as the following: the power of the tongue is like the bit in a horse's mouth, the rudder of a ship, or a spark of a match. Horses are controlled, a ship is guided, and a tongue can grow out of control like wildfire, "a world of unrighteousness."

Our speech can be inconsistent when controlled by self instead of God (James 3:9-10). In verse eight, James continues the warning. Beasts and birds, reptiles and sea creatures can be tamed by humankind but "no human being can tame the tongue." As hard as we try, the tongue can't be harnessed and words can't be taken back.

One minute the tongue is blessing God and the next, cursing the "people who are made in the likeness of God." This should not be the case. So why is it? Because whatever flows out of the mouth comes from what is in an individual's heart.

Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34b). Individuals cannot control the tongue

because the root problem flows from a sinful heart (Mark 7:14-23).

We need God's wisdom to direct our speech (James 3:13-18). James asks, "Who is wise and understanding among you?" The person's conduct shows "his works in the meekness of wisdom" (v.13). Who is wisdom? Jesus, and through Him we have "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

Wiersbe writes, "Knowledge enables us to take things apart, but wisdom enables us to put things together and relate God's truth to daily life."

Furthermore, James writes man's wisdom is "unspiritual, demonic," and "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice." Wisdom from above is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere" (v.17).

Our desire should be to have "godly wisdom," not "worldly wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:20-21). Wisdom tells us to pray before we speak and rely upon His Word. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).

Read the book of Proverbs, underline the references to the tongue or speech, and ask God for wisdom to display His grace in your conversations.

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