

"Taming the Tongue" James 3:1-12 Sunday School Lesson

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Print off this Sunday School lesson about using the tongue to honor God. It is based on James three and will help children see that God is pleased when we speak in right ways. God himself is our example on righteous speech. This lesson was intended for a Sunday School classroom setting but could also be modified for a children's church lesson about the tongue.

Bible Truth: Good speech can honor God – using the tongue.

Scripture: James 3:1-12

Target Age Group: Age 7 – 12 (U.S. 1st – 6th Grade)

Original Learning Context: Sunday School

Target Time Frame: 30 minutes

Supply List: white/black board; writing tool; paper, matches, and cup of water

Learning Goal: After this lesson, children will understand proper speech that honors the Lord and others.

Learning Indicator: By retelling the lessons taught in the passage back to the teacher with understanding to James teaching on the tongue.

Optional: Download our [Book of James Bible coloring page](#).

Learning Activity #1

Active Listening: Divide the children into two groups and assign the first group the task of listening for the ways that James compares the tongue. Assign the second group the task of listening for the importance of controlling the things that they say.

Immediately following the reading of the passage call on some volunteers from each group to share what they discovered in the listening assignment and write their answers on the white/black board.

Learning Activity #2

Agree/Disagree: Read the following statements and have the children take turns telling whether they agree or disagree with the statement. Encourage them to give a small statement about why they agree or disagree about the statement from the passage read in James.

- 1) The tongue can be tamed. Disagree. (Js 3:2, 8)
- 2) We stumble in many ways with what we say. Agree. (Js. 3:2)
- 3) As Christians our tongue can only bless God now. Disagree. (Js. 3:9)
- 4) A rudder is small but controls the ships directions. Agree. (Js. 3:4)
- 5) A fountain can give bitter and fresh water at the same time. Disagree. (Js. 3:11)
- 6) A small flame can cause a forest to burn down. Agree. (Js.5)

Learning Activity #3

Open Discussion: Help the children understand the difficulty of controlling the tongue especially without the Lord by using paper and matches. The first time you burn a small piece of paper talk about how you can't do anything to control how quickly it burns the paper and it's direction. With a second piece a paper, dip ½ of it in water and as it burns the half not wet talk about the wet side representing how when we give the Lord control of our tongue, the Holy Spirit can temper the damage our tongue can do by controlling it's direction.

Test: Ask several volunteers to give examples of ways they can use their tongue to bless the Lord and others. Ask several others to give examples of ways the tongue can be used to curse the Lord and others.

Connection with the Gospel:

This lesson gives an opportunity to speak to the children about the way the Lord can make a difference in their lives when they put their faith and trust in Him as Savior. The children should be told that the Holy Spirit resides within them when they become Christians, and it's the Holy Spirit that enables them to live in obedience to the Lord.

Present the opportunity to the children to personally accept Christ as their personal Savior by giving a simple presentation of the gospel to them. Have all the children bow their heads with their eyes closed and ask any children wishing to pray and seek Jesus as their Savior to raise their hand. Be sure to pull them aside separately to speak with them and determine their understanding and desire for salvation.

Connection with Life:

Help the children elaborate on ways they can use the things they say to encourage others and be examples to those around them that do not know Jesus as their Savior. Talk to the children about common areas of sin and encourage them to seek forgiveness from the Lord for the times they have used their words to hurt others. Challenge them to seek forgiveness from those they have said unkind things to that day.

Taming the Tongue

Bible Craft Ideas from James 3:1-12

The tongue can be a tremendous tool...or a deadly weapon! It might seem simple enough, but our words have powerful impact. It's important to teach young children that our words carry weight, and we want to use them wisely. These crafts remind students to think before speaking and to use kind words that build others up and glorify God. A "tongues in cheek envelope" offers ideas for using speech well. A "two-tongued puppet" warns of the dangers of harmful words. And a fun "open-mouths snackivity" provides a fun edible craft to enjoy!



Bible Verses or Craft Captions to Consider... (James 3:1-12)

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. -James 3:7-9

Words can be Harmful...words can be helpful!

Use words wisely! Here's how...

Glorify God with speech and praise!

Lift others up with words

Use the tongue as a tool of kindness!

Think before you speak!

More Teaching Ideas:

- Watch the video example of this [children's sermon lesson](#) or related [Bible craft demonstration](#)
- Compare a full [James 3:1-12 Sunday School Lesson](#)
- Compare an alternate [kids Bible lesson on Taming the Tongue](#)
- Download our [Book of James coloring page](#)

Craft one: "Tongue in Cheek Envelope"

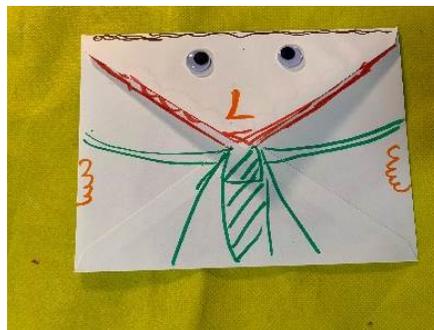
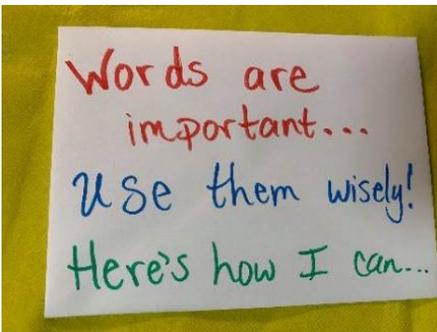
You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Glue, tape, or staples
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Envelopes
- Other decorations (jewels, stickers, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Decorate the envelope, adding a "face" to make the opening flap appear as a mouth.
2. Add verses or captions to the front of the envelope.
3. Cut "tongue" or mouth shapes out of construction paper or cardstock.
4. On the "tongues", write ways to use words kindly and positively.
5. Tuck the wise word methods into the envelope, and use it to remember how to use words well!



Craft Two: "Two-Tongued Puppet"

You will need:

- Paper plates
- Stickers/decorations
- Markers/crayons
- Cardstock/paper
- Glue/tape
- Scissors
- Popsicle sticks
- Captions/verses



Procedure:

1. Decorate one side of the plate to look like a "sad face", with tongue sticking out.
2. On the opposite side of the plate, add a smiling mouth and happy face.
3. Add verses and captions to consider the potential two-sided nature of our words!
4. Glue or tape a popsicle stick to the plate to hold it up as a puppet.
5. Alternate option: use a paper bag as the base for your puppet.



Craft Three: “Smiling Apple Snackivity”

You will need:

- Apples, sliced
- Miniature marshmallows
- Peanut butter (or frosting/cream cheese)
- Tools for spreading and serving



Procedure:

1. Cut an apple into slices.
2. Smear with cream cheese, peanut butter, or frosting.
3. Add mini marshmallows to the sliced apples to look like “teeth.”
4. Admire your “mouths” ...then put them in your mouth and enjoy! 😊



Taming the Tongue

Children's Sermon from James 3:1-12

This message emphasizes to kids the importance of using speech wisely. Children experience the impact that words can have, but they don't always stop to think before they speak or consider how their words will impact others. This message reminds students that the things we say can be a helpful tool or a harmful weapon. Words do have lasting effects for good or for bad. We want to encourage our young people to use their mouths to glorify God and to lift up those around them.

Law/Gospel Theme: In this passage we focus on how our speech can serve dual purposes, to potentially help or harm. We recognize that sometimes we do make mistakes and say things we should not. It's important to remember at these times that we can use our speech to ask for forgiveness, both from other people and from God. We know that He will always grant grace and give us the strength and wisdom to use our words well.

Optional Materials: items that could be tools, but also potentially dangerous (for example, lighter, razor, knife, hammer, etc.).

Bible Passage: James 3:1-12

Message Note: As with most messages, the details of how you choose to communicate this are adaptable and should cater to timing as well as to your audience and student needs. Use your judgment and ideas to best serve students.

More Teaching Ideas:

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Tame that Tongue (James 3:1-12) Children's Sermon

Greet children, carrying (in hand or bagged) several items that could be tools or potentially cause harm:

Hello, children of God!

Are there any items in your house that you are not allowed to touch or use? I have a few items here that I brought from my house. I use these now, but I'm always very careful about how I use them and how I put them away. When I was younger, I wasn't even allowed to touch these things. *(Take out whatever items you have, and describe them one by one.)*

So here I have a lighter. Now, this is a helpful tool if I want to light a fire in the fireplace, or if I have candles to light or something. However, if I used it for the wrong purpose, I might start a fire that could do damage, or I could burn myself. That's why it's never good to play with matches or lighters...now, I also have a very sharp knife right here. If I want to cut a watermelon or a loaf of bread or a turkey *(side note: obviously the same knife would not be used for all of those foods...just describe whatever knife you have)* this knife would be great. On the other hand, if I don't use this carefully, I could cut myself or someone else, which might even lead to a hospital visit. Over here, I have a razor. You might see these in your parents' bathroom, for when they need to shave. But it's not something that a kid should play with, because there are sharp blades on here that could hurt you!

So you can see through just a few examples that there are a lot of things we have that can be used either as helpful tools or potentially dangerous weapons. Did you know that you have something you carry around all the time that works the same way?? There is a part of YOU which can be used to help or to hurt. Do you have any idea what it might be? *(Stick out your tongue.)* It's THIS! Your tongue! The Bible talks about how powerful and even dangerous the tongue can be. The book of James says that the tongue is like a fire, and can be full of poison! Now, you might be wondering how our tongues can have such potential. After all, what do we use tongues for besides tasting and eating food? Well, our tongues are essential for something else: talking! Speech is a remarkable and unique gift that God gives us, but He wants us to use that gift carefully. The things we say can actually have a huge impact on people.

For instance, when we say things that are not true, or that are not kind, it can hurt someone's feelings. There's a saying "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"...It's not entirely true. Words can definitely hurt deeply. We can also misuse speech when we speak disrespectfully. Maybe you talk back to a parent or a teacher, or fight with someone and say something rude on purpose. You

might even use inappropriate language or say a bad word. Or you might gossip and say something about someone else...there are a lot of ways that we might worry, anger, or hurt someone with our words.

On the other hand, there are a lot of positive things we can do with our words, as well! Can you think of any? (*Allow responses.*) We can say things that are kind and encouraging to compliment others. We can use speech to teach people things. We can cheer someone on or support them. And we can use our words to praise and glorify God! We worship Him with music, and also through prayer. God always wants us to come to Him in prayer and will always grant us grace when we make mistakes.

It's important to stop and think before we speak. We need to think about the words we use and consider whether they will be helpful or harmful. If we don't have kind words to use, it might be best to not say anything. Think about the way you want others to speak to you, and address them in the same way. Avoid speaking out in anger towards someone. Sometimes we mess up. We might say something we shouldn't, and we usually can't just "take it back". However, we can also use our words to confess, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. We can do this with people we hurt, and we can do it with God, who will always forgive us and have mercy on us. How wonderful to know that we can ask God for wisdom and guidance as we use our words!

Why don't we say a prayer to God right now?

Children's Prayer Moment:

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of speech

Help us to use our words well and wisely.

May we glorify you with our mouths

And encourage and help others

Thank you for your love

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Bible Verses/story to Reference: James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. [-James 3:1-12](#)



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This resource was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#) (pictured right). She serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO. She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.



Every week she writes new [Sunday School lessons](#), [Bible crafts](#), and [children's sermons](#). You can find her new videos every week on the [Ministry-To-Children YouTube channel](#).

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

My name is Tony Kummer (pictured below). I started Ministry-To-Children.com in 2007 as a free resource for anyone sharing Jesus with kids. It is my personal honor to share these resources with churches around the world.

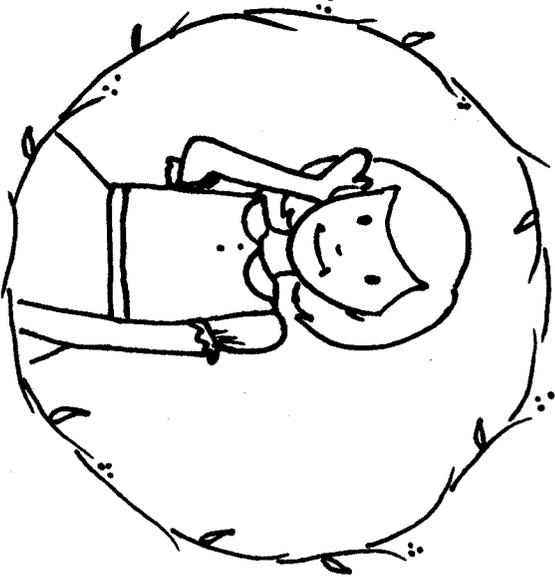


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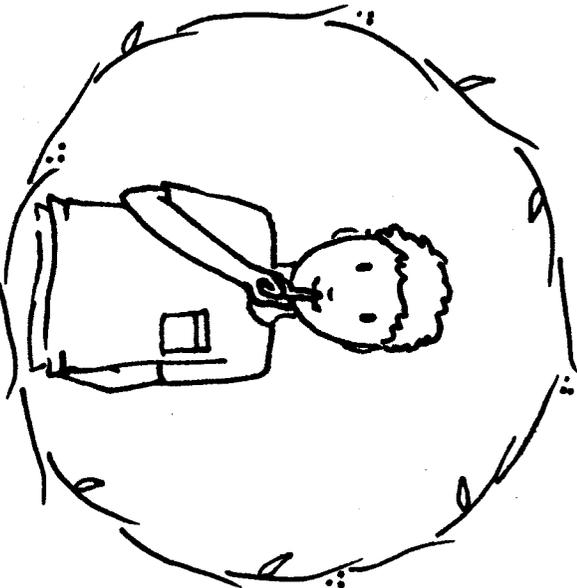
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May God continue to bless your ministry!

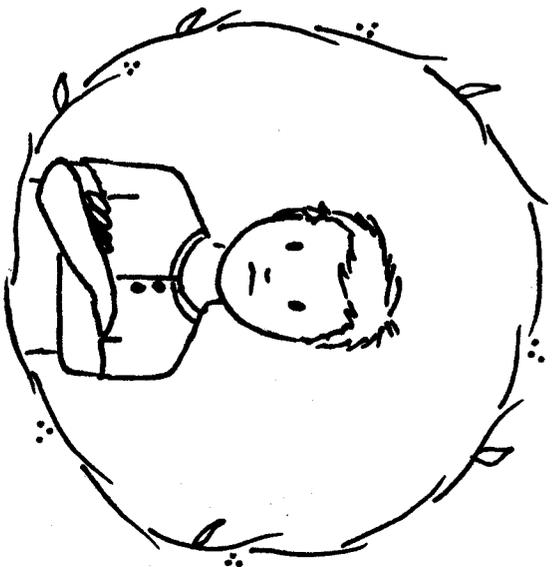
Tony Kummer



QUICK TO HEAR



SLOW TO SPEAK



SLOW TO ANGER

James

A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SOWN IN PEACE

