

A Real Tongue Lashing

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ~ James 3:8-9

Discover the Context James 3



If it's true that no one can tame the tongue, then this is just one more reason that we need Christ. The sin that's in our hearts comes out of our mouths, and we need Christ's forgiveness for speaking harmful words. We need Christ's power to restrain our speech. Ask God for this help in prayer today.



How can one's speech and tone ruin the unity of staff this summer? Spend some time creating a covenant of edifying speech that everyone can agree to. Hold each other accountable to it throughout the summer.



Take some of the suggested verses from today's devotion and write them out on note cards or pieces of paper. Now tape them in places where you'll see them throughout the day—in your suitcase, closet, or near your workstation.

We have all said it, usually after a tirade of angry words or a sarcastic comment. Sadly, we often say these words before an apology. For some reason many of us believe that the sentence, "I didn't mean to say that," somehow erases the words we just shot from our mouths like bullets. Unfortunately, this sentence only acts as a superficial fix for a gaping wound. It doesn't undo the hurt that just came from the tongue lashing we gave.

James was certainly right when he claimed that no one can tame the tongue. Our tongues are like a restless evil, pacing to and fro, just waiting to remark. As soon as the opportunity arises, the tongue acts.

Evil comes in many forms. Do you find yourself having to say, "I'm just kidding," a little too frequently? Or have you ever contributed a gossip item at prayer request time?

In addition to calling the tongue a restless evil, James also claims that it is full of deadly poison. The only antidote for this poison is the restraint and grace of the Holy Spirit. We are not asked to domesticate our animal tongues; we are asked only to rely on the supernatural strength of God. It is difficult to speak rashly or coldly when you are consciously doing two things—praying and thinking of Scripture.

If you find yourself having to make excuses for your wandering tongue, try committing some of these verses to memory: Philippians 4:8; Psalm 34:13; James 3:17; and Proverbs 21:23. When you are tempted to fire off angry words or gossipy tidbits, take the time to dwell on these verses. The old adage, "Think before you speak," really does work. It gives you time to turn your thoughts to the Lord.

Christ-centered words paired with the fruit of love will result in more conversations that don't have to end with, "I didn't mean to say that." Train your tongue to be an agent of God's grace rather than a tool used for giving a tongue lashing. [CLG]