



STUDY 5

FAITH WORKS IN YOUR SPEECH

JAMES 3:1-18

As we've seen, the situation of James best fits a period before 66AD when social tensions leading to the destruction of Jerusalem were infiltrating the life of the church.

Sociologist Gilbert R. Rendle claims that societies swing from times of cultural harmony where everyone works together, to times of individualism, where people expect to have their own needs met, marked by aggressive behaviour and meanness. Rendle argues that churches are often the same. "In much the same way, [we default to]... cultural standards of behaviour... hidden agendas, oppositional subgroups, blaming, and in too many cases, accusations and name calling."¹ Instead of defaulting to cultural behaviours or complaining about people in our individualistic society 'out there', James says that if we follow Jesus we need to practice new behaviours that show how our faith and lives align.

¹G.R. Rendle, *Behavioural Covenants in Congregations* (Bethesda: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999) 19

5. Look at verses 7 and 12. In Genesis 1:28 God commands humanity to subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing. How has your own tongue proved untameable?

6. If you've ever been uncomfortably aware of a 'disconnect' between your words on a Sunday and your language through the week, how do you feel about James' appraisal of the inconsistent words that come out of our mouths?

7. Break into pairs or triplets to find the main point Jesus is making in: **Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33-37; 15:17-20**. Where does Jesus locate the root cause of our evil and careless words and deeds?

Read James 3:13-18.

8. List the outward conduct James expects in those who are either worldly or wise to God:

Earthly Wisdom	Wisdom From Above

TRANSFORMED HEARTS

James is painting a picture of what it looks like to not just claim to trust in Jesus but genuinely live it out. But this change, taming our own tongue, is beyond us. This obedience requires grace, transformed hearts that only God can provide. In verse 14, James suggests that the starting point for a life that results in peace, not discord, is to be truthful about the state of our hearts before God.

9. How might we be more effective in our gospel mission and witness if we look to Jesus to tame our tongues?

10. In verse 1, why is it essential that anyone wanting to become teachers are mature in Christ with Jesus-tamed tongues?

11. What change are you hoping to see in your own life as a result of this study?

Pray for each other that your faith in Jesus, “the wisdom from heaven”, would tame your untameable tongue, and that all around you peace would take the place of conflict.