

# Taming the Tongue

*James 3:1-12*

## K-5 Joint Group Time

**Main Point** - Our words can do either good or evil. So stop and think before you speak.

### Memory Verse

James 1:19

Learn the verse by saying it as instructed:

*Everyone should be*

(pause, take a breath, say next bit very fast)

*quick to listen,*

(pause, say next bit very slow)

*slow to speak*

(pause, say next bit even slower)

*and slow to become angry.*

(pause, say next bit normal speed)

*James chapter one verse nineteen*

### Singing

Select 2/3 songs about living God's way and in particular, watching the words we speak.

### Fruit Tasting

**Warning: check for allergies before asking children to do this activity. If unsure, have a leader taste test the fruit.**

Need:

- four different fruits (orange, banana, apple, lemon)
- blindfold

Instructions:

- Blindfold the taster.
- Hand taster one piece of fruit at a time and ask them to guess what sort of fruit tree the fruit came from.

**Conclusion:**

- *In James 3 it says that grapevines only ever grow grapes.*
- *Fig trees only ever grow figs.*
- *We know that this came from an orange tree, this came from and apple tree.... (hold the fruit up one at a time as you speak).*
- *The words that come out of mouths are our fruit.*
- *If we love God, then we will be different from people who don't.*
- *We will be more like Jesus who only ever spoke good, kind and truthful words.*
- *What do your words say about you?*

# Taming the Tongue

*James 3:1-12*

## K-2 Group Time

**Main Point** - Our words can do either good or evil. So stop and think before you speak.

## The Power of the Tongue

Need:

- water tray and a toy boat that can be steered by a rudder
- pictures of large sailing boats (need one picture or diagram of a sailing boat and it's rudder)
- toy horses with bridles in their mouths
- pictures of horses being ridden with bridles in their mouth
- wild animals and tame animals being used in circuses to perform tricks
- a picture of a match being lit and a raging bush fire
- or, any of the above in a video clip

Introduce both the ship's rudder and horse's bridle.

Discuss and make the following points:

- both are small
- but both can turn and steer a large boat/animal
- tongue is small but it's very powerful
- powerful to say very good things
- but also powerful to say very bad things

Introduce the picture of a small spark and a raging bush fire.

Ask:

- *Why are bush fires so bad?*
- *How does a bush fire start?*

Make the following points:

- just a few small words and we can start something that gets worse and worse and worse
- our tongues can cause a lot of damage

## Small Group Story Time

Download the resource file titled, *James Stencils* (available on the *Kidswise* web site). Find the stencil with the following words on it:

- rude words
- unkind words
- fighting words
- lying words
- swear words

Copy on A4 cardboard and cut out each strip.

Brainstorm about all the bad words that can come out of our mouths: rude words, unkind words, fighting words, lying words, swear words... (reveal one at a time).

Leader tells the following story about a boy whose words cause lots of pain both for himself and others:

*Sam woke up. He looked at his clock. He was late for school. He jumped out of bed and rushed to get ready. He ran all the way to school and arrived just as the bell rang. He raced to lines and got there at the same time as Billy. Billy pushed ahead of Sam. Sam pushed Billy and said, "What d'you think you're doing! Get lost!" Billy pushed Sam and Sam pushed back just as the teacher walked by. They were both pulled out of lines.*

*Later that day, Sam was walking past a group of girls. The girls were laughing. Sam was annoyed and told one girl, "What's so funny. Looked in the mirror lately fatso!" The girl turned red and ran off crying.*

*It was then that Sam realised his teacher was standing right behind him. Sam turned and smiled weakly at his teacher.*

*Sam blurted out, "I was just walking past and she ran off crying!" Sam's teacher shook his head, "Sam the girls were laughing at a joke I'd just told them. What you said was cruel. Go. You will spend lunchtime outside my office."*

*Sam looked back on his day. Every word that had come out of his mouth had caused him trouble. His words had caused a fight, made a girl cry and his lie had meant he'd missed out on playing at lunch time.*

## Small Group Discussion

1. *What sort of words came out of Sam's mouth?* Have children point to the strips of cardboard.

(fighting words, unkind words, lying words)

2. *Words can start a fight or stop a fight. What could've Sam have done differently?*

(he could've left it and said nothing, he could've asked Billy not to push in)

3. *Sam thought the girls were laughing at him, but he was wrong. What could've Sam done differently?*

(he could've asked them what they were laughing about, or ignored them and walked on)

4. *Why do you think Sam lied to his teacher?*

(lied because he didn't want to get in trouble)

Application:

- *Is there anything you have said to someone you need to apologise for?*
- *Who was the last person you said a kind word to? Who is the next person you are going to say a kind word to?*

Conclusion:

- *Our words matter to God.*
- *He hears everyone of them.*
- *Being a follower of Jesus means we will be careful how we speak.*
- *Every word that left Jesus' tongue was only ever kind and good.*
- *We need to slow down and think before we speak.*
- *To speak only good and kind words, like Jesus.*

## **Prayer Time**

Repeated Prayer

*Father God, – we are sorry – for the words we say – that are unkind, – unfair and untrue. – Words that hurt you – and people. – Please help us – to be more like Jesus – and say kind and truthful words. – Amen*

Individual Prayer

Ask the children to pray about their answers to the application questions.

## Imaginary Play

- Provide a water tray and boats with rudders on them for the children to steer across the water.
- Provide toy horses (with bridles), a farm mat and horse jumps for the children to play with, steering the horses around a show jumping course.

## Horse Picture

- Download the resource file titled, *James Stencils* (available on the *Kidswise* web site). Find the stencil of a horse and the title, *A huge horse can be turned and steered by a small bridle. Our tongue is small but it has great power. James 3:5-6*
- Make one copy per child on A4 paper. Provide collage material to decorate the horse.

## Horse/Boat Collage

- Download the resource file titled, *James Stencils* (available on the *Kidswise* web site). Find the stencil titled, *A huge horse can be turned and steered by a small bridle. A sailing boat can be turned and steered by a small rudder. Our tongue is small but it has great power. James 3:5-6*
- Make one copy per child on A3 paper. Provide horse and/or boat magazines for the children to find horse and/or boat pictures and create a collage.

## Fire Picture

Download the resource file titled, *James Stencils* (available on the *Kidswise* web site). Find the stencil titled, *The tongue is like a spark that sets a whole forest on fire. The words we say can destroy everyone around us, including ourselves. James 3:5-6*

### *Option 1*

Make one copy per child on A3 paper. Provide pegs. Attach wool of varying lengths to each peg. Provide thin red and yellow paint

for the children to dip in the wool (holding on to the pegs) and then print onto the paper and create a fire.

*Option 2*

Make one copy per child on A4 paper. Provide strips of red and yellow cellophane for the children to glue on and create a fire.

# Taming the Tongue

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## 3-5 Group Time

**Main Point** - Our words can do either good or evil. So stop and think before you speak.

### The Power of the Tongue

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Introduce the picture of a small spark and a raging bush fire.

Ask:

- *Why are bush fires so bad?*
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Make the following points:

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### Mind Map (small groups)

Provide easy to read Bibles, an A3 sheet of paper per child and pencils or markers.

Read James 3:3-12

- Ask the children to create a mind map of everything the passage tells them about the tongue.
- A mind map is simply a summary of the passage, using both pictures/cartoons and captions/quotes.
- Begin by asking the children to write the word, *Tongue* (or draw it) in the middle of the page and then draw arrows/lines to each section. **Note: the rudder and bit are different examples of the same point so you may like to suggest the children send out an arrow that splits in two for this section.**
- Ask them to read slowly through the passage and cartoon every picture mentioned (rudder, bit, small spark, taming wild animals, fruit trees) and adding captions to explain what the picture teaches us about our tongues.
- When finished have children share what they have learned.

### Discussion (small groups)

1. *James says that our tongue is small but very powerful (James 3:3-5). What words have been said to you that had a good effect on you?*  
(possibilities: the gospel, kind words when hurt, words of friendship, words of understanding, words about your gifts...)
2. *James says that the tongue has the power to destroy. What words do you think have the power to destroy?*  
(possibilities: I hate you!, swear words, cruel words, fighting words, teasing words...)
3. *James says that we use our tongues to praise God one minute and curse each other the next. Why are the cruel words we say to each other so wrong? James 3:9*  
(we are all made by God and made to be like God, so God hates it when we don't treat each other properly)

Think it through:

- *How do fights at school begin?*
- *What hurts you longer, cruel words or being punched?*

Application:

- *Is there anything you have said to someone you need to apologise for?*
- *What words are you in the habit of saying that you need to stop?*
- *Who was the last person you said a kind word to? Who is the next person you are going to say a kind word to?*

**Conclusion:**

- *Our words matter to God.*
- *He hears everyone of them?*
- *Being a follower of Jesus means we will be careful how we speak.*
- *Every word that left Jesus' tongue was only ever kind and good.*
- *We need to slow down and think before we speak.*
- *To speak only good and kind words, like Jesus.*

**Prayer Time**

- Ask the children to pray about their answers to the application questions.

**Card Making/Letter Writing**

Provide children with a variety of card making and letter writing material and encourage them to make and write short messages to people. Suggestions: encourage a missionary family, get well card, sorry card, wish you were here, thinking about you...

**Boat and Horse Races**

**Need:**

- toy horses on wooden poles (one per team)
- a cardboard box large enough for a child to sit in and pretend that it's a boat (one per team)

**Instructions:**

- Divide children into even teams.
- Each member, of each team, has to take a turn at riding their horse up to the end (a designated line) and back.
- When each team member has ridden the horse, the first team member steps into the boat (cardboard box) and the rest of the team pulls or pushes them a short distance towards the line.

- Each team member must have a turn at being pushed in the boat.
- First team across the line wins.

Conclusion:

- *Every time you see a horse with a bit in its mouth or a large sailing boat being turned by a small rudder, think about your tongue.*
- *Are the words you speak doing good or bad?*
- *Which way is your tongue turning you?*