

# IS YOUR LIFE— BLESSING GOD?

If James could reduce the purpose of his letter down to only two words, they would be “Spiritual maturity”.

Personal spiritual growth among individuals is just about the greatest need in our church today.

In our end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are seeing too many churches sink to a role of providing playpens for babies instead of workshops for adults.

That is exactly what the writer of Hebrews warned us in 5:11-14

*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. NIV*

One look at the problems James covers in this short letter says it all. As a pastor he was dealing with childhood illnesses. He is writing and exhorting them about the five marks of childish and immature believers. Did you notice them?

1. Spiritual babes are **IMPATIENT WITH THE TROUBLES OF LIFE** (1:1–4)
2. Spiritual babes are **QUICK TO TALK BUT SLOW TO LIVE THE TRUTH** (2:14ff)
3. Spiritual babes **HAVE AN OUT OF CONTROL TONGUE** (3:1ff)
4. Spiritual babes are **OFTEN BICKERING AND JEALOUS** (4:1ff)
5. Spiritual babes are **BUSY COLLECTING MATERIAL “TOYS”** (5:1ff)

So what did James write as the first letter to the New Testament church? Simply this, he exhorts them to a clear and simple way of life **REFLECTING A MATURE WALK OF FAITH.**

As Christ was received by faith, so the way of life flowing from His presence in a life would be reflected in the walk of faith.

So James gives 12 clear indicators of how the walk of faith is going. You are headed toward Christian maturity when these areas are in line:

1. A Mature Walk of Faith endures troubles 1:2-11
2. A Mature Walk of Faith deals with temptation 1:12-16
3. A Mature Walk of Faith obeys the Word 1:17-27
4. A Mature Walk of Faith **ALLOWS** no prejudice 2:1-13.
5. A Mature Walk of Faith displays itself in godly works 2:14-26.
6. A Mature Walk of Faith **Bridles** the tongue 3:1-12
7.
  - **THE TONGUE USED POWERFULLY IS ABLE TO HARNESS AND DIRECT: THE BIT AND RUDDER (3:1-4).**
  - **THE TONGUE USED PERVERSELY IS ABLE TO BURN AND DESTROY: THE FIRE AND BEASTS (3:5-8).**
  - **THE TONGUE USED PURELY IS ABLE TO RENEW AND REFRESH: THE FOUNTAIN AND TREE (3:9-12).**

Remember that it has been estimated that from the first "Good morning" to the last "Good night," the average person engages in thirty conversations a day. Each day, his words could make a book of 50-60 pages-the equivalent of more than one hundred books a year of 200 pages each. So -

- **THE TONGUE USED POWERFULLY IS ABLE TO HARNESS AND DIRECT: THE BIT AND RUDDER (3:1-4).** circle bit & rudder

Our tongue is an intriguing study of great contrasts. Think of that object resting in your mouth just now.

To the Doctor it is a two ounce slab of mucous membrane containing a world of inter-related muscles and nerves. That is the interesting tongue.

To our Body it is a vital organ that must work properly if we are to eat, chew, taste, swallow and talk. That is the helpful tongue.

To other People the tongue is the primary avenue of communication. It gives us the ability to inflect sounds and articulate words distinctly. It gives us a vehicle to communicate our thoughts. That is the essential tongue.

Yes, without the tongue –

No teacher could guide their pupils.

No coach could prepare his team.

No mother could softly sing her baby to sleep.

No leader could motivate his group adequately.

No Pastor could bring comfort to heavy hearts.

No issues could be discussed and resolved.

In fact, without the communication of conversation our whole planet would be reduced to a mere roar of unintelligible grunting and groaning. It is rare that we stop to reflect on how vital this little muscle in our mouth really is.

So what can we do with these tongues?

1. SPEAK GOD'S WORD: Joshua 1:8 "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. NKJV
2. CONFESS OUR SINS: Psalm 32:3-5 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah NKJV
3. SHARE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIFE: Psalm 77:12 I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. NKJV
4. PRAISE GOD: Luke 1:64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. NKJV
5. CONFESS JESUS: Romans 10:9-10 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. NKJV
6. SAY HEALTHY WORDS: Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. NKJV
7. BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS: 1 Peter 3:9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. NKJV

➤ **THE TONGUE USED PERVERSELY IS ABLE TO BURN AND DESTROY: THE FIRE AND BEASTS (3:5-8).**

But the tongue is not merely vital, it is also volatile. It was Washington Irving who first stated "The tongue is the only cutting tool that grows sharper by constant use." He actually was only mirroring the words of the first New Testament letter. James the brother of Jesus says (3:6-8) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. NKJV

3:6. "inflaming the whole course of . . . life" (lit., "the wheel of existence" or "wheel of birth," **ton trochon tēs geneseōs**). It is as though the tongue is at the center or hub of the wheel of nature and, like a fireworks display, the wheel is set on fire at the center. The more it burns, the faster it revolves until the whole wheel spins in a blaze, spitting fire in all directions. But the tongue is only the fuse; the source of the deadly fire is hell itself (lit., "Gehenna," a place in the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem where human sacrifice had been offered [Jer. 7:31] and where continuous burning of rubbish made it a fit illustration of the lake of fire).

Without proper care and use the tongue can become a lifelong scourge. A flame throwing tool of destruction that blackens the foliage along the path of life. One writer<sup>1</sup> noticed a grave stone with an interesting epitaph and reflects upon it. Listen to his thoughts:

*On a windswept hill in an English countryside church yard stands a drab, gray slate tombstone. Bleak and unpretentious, it leans slightly to one side, beaten slick and thin by the blast of time. The quaint stone bears an epitaph not easily seen unless you stoop over and look closely. The faint etchings read:*

BENEATH THIS STONE, A LUMP OF CLAY,  
LIES ARABELLA YOUNG,  
WHO, ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH OF MAY,  
BEGAN TO HOLD HER TONGUE.

What an awful way to be remembered. And even more, what an incredibly wasted life. Why would such an awful commentary need to be etched in stone for Arabella Young? Because she never dealt with the powerful member of her body that resides in the mouth!

With the deadliness of cyanide, a verbal assault kills. With the destruction of fire verbal missiles find their marks and destroy. But this hellish beast as James describes our tongues looks so innocent as it rests peacefully behind the ivory gates of our teeth. There are so many incredible ways we can use our tongue. It is about the most agile of all our organs in the body. But, James tells us that our tongues are humanly untameable. They are beyond the power of man to control. Only God through His personal presence as the indwelling Holy Spirit can control your tongue and mine. As James states we can watch the wonder of animals who are trained: Lassie, Shamu and Flipper. There are tigers who learn to jump through rings of fire at the circus, killer whales that perform at Sea World, Falcons that land on our hands and hunt for us, dogs who fetch the morning paper, pigeons who carry messages, bears that ride bicycles, elephants that stand on balls and horses that come at the whistle of their trainers . . .

But not so with that tongue of ours. Many have commented on the need of tongue taming.

- William Norris an American journalist once wrote:

If your lips would keep from slips,  
Five things observe with care:  
To whom you speak; of whom you speak;  
And how, and when, and where.

- Publius a Greek philosopher wrote: I have often regretted my speech, never my silence.
- David, the man after God's own heart made a life long commitment in Psalm 39. Lets turn there and consider the necessity of following his example:

---

<sup>1</sup> Swindoll, *Seasons of Life*, p. .

Psalm 39:1 I said, "I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me." NKJV

David shows us the only way to control our tongues is to give them in consecration to the Lord. How can we start this habit? Turn on to Psalm 141:3 Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. NKJV

There it is, a prayer of dedication, a plea for the Lord to take and use our tongue for His glory.

Jesus explains how important our words are. Look at Matthew 12:34 "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? **For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** NKJV

The window on the soul is the mouth. All that lies within is reflected by our words. What can our words show? These are the byproducts of an unregenerated heart:

1. CURSES: Psalm 10:7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness. NASB
2. HATRED: Psalm 109:3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause. NKJV
3. PERVERSITY Proverbs 6:12 A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth; NKJV
4. LIES Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal truthfully are His delight. NKJV
5. FOOLISHNESS: Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth Foolishness. NKJV
6. EVIL Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. NASB
7. FLATTERY: Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin. NKJV
8. IDLE WORDS: Matthew 12:36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. NKJV
1. GOSSIP: Romans 1:28-30 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; **they are whisperers**, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, NKJV
10. CORRUPT (ROTTEN or CUTTING) WORDS: Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. NKJV

Is there any hope for taming this thing so dangerous? Yes, in the garden of lives cultivated by God through His Word and in the power of His Spirit we find some wonderful lives with transformed tongues. From the soil of failure and the rocks of

defeat under God's care come beautiful and fragrant mouths of wholesome and healing words.

There are many but we need to just concentrate on one who bear the marks of a tamed tongue. ISAIAH THE DIRTY TONGUE: Isaiah 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.<sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.<sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" <sup>4</sup> And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." NKJV

Cleansing: v. 6-7

Yeilding: v. 8

Commissioning: v. 9-13

Wow, having trouble with an unclean mouth, dirty talk? Let God cleanse, let Him lead. Be God's man or woman, boy or girl. His touch transforms. His cleansing restores. His attention gives eternal worth.

No matter what depths of sin we have gone to, Christ can save, Jesus can keep, His blood can cleanse and Jesus will use you for His service!

➤ **THE TONGUE USED PURELY IS ABLE TO RENEW AND REFRESH: THE FOUNTAIN AND TREE (3:9-12).**

3:9-10. Similar to the forked tongue of a snake, man's uncontrolled tongue both emits praise and spews out curses. "Praise," or "saying a good word" (eulogoumen) of our Lord and Father (this is the only place where the NT uses this title of God) is polluted by a "curse," or "wishing evil" (**katarōmetha**) on men . . . made in God's likeness (cf. Gen. 1:27; 9:6; Col. 1:10). That both praise and cursing should come from the same mouth is incongruous. My brothers, this should not be.

3:11-12. Again James turned to the natural elements to illustrate his point. Anticipating a negative response, James asked, Can both fresh (lit., "sweet," glyky) water and salt (lit., "bitter," pikron) water flow, or "bubble up," from the same spring? Can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Of course not. Neither does salt (halykon) make water sweet (glyky). The point is clear: a believer's tongue should not be an instrument of inconsistency.

So what should we avoid? Never use our mouth in an unregenerated way! What should we do? Tame our tongue by the Holy Spirit as His Word richly dwells and permeates all our lives. Why not like David, make some plans now to change our usage of our tongues?

Here are three great ways to change:

1. **THINK FIRST:** before starting to say something pause a few seconds and ask are these words – true or false? exaggerated or accurate? pure or dirty? healing or cutting? grateful or complaining?
2. **TALK LESS:** it is a biblical fact that the less you talk the wiser you appear. Plan, prepare, concentrate and enrich each opportunity to speak. Make each a time to speak as 1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. NKJV
3. **START NOW:** like David, ask God to fit you for a word retainer, get braces put on that tongue. Remember Arabella Young? She waited so long it never happened. Don't waste your greatest tool.