

Taming the Tongue

TONGUE • LECTIONARY 24 • YEAR B

JAMES 3:1-12

Grades
1-2



24

What's happening in this story?

James was most likely written at a time when churches were expanding from small house churches to more noticeable communities within cities and towns. When believers behaved badly, neighbors noticed, and the witness of the church was damaged. James directs readers and hearers to consider their own behavior and make practical, concrete changes to demonstrate that their faith matters to the community and world. The lectionary selection highlights the damage that poorly chosen words and uncontrolled speech can do.

What does this story mean for kids?

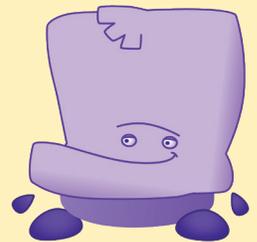
Kids will take away the idea that their words are powerful and that God wants us to use our words responsibly. Remind kids not to speak badly about others, *and* to speak well of others. Kids can use their words to uplift others. Another approach would be to consider that on occasion, the things we say are misinterpreted or misrepresented. Kids may wrestle with the idea that sometimes, even when they mean well, their words still might hurt someone's feelings.

What is the lectionary connection?

The Season after Pentecost is connected to growth in faith, church, and Christian life; all are themes in James. Encourage opportunities for kids to practice good speech habits and avoid those James warns about.

AGE LEVEL TIP

At the beginning of the year, call each child by name a few times during class. Encourage the kids to call one another by name as well. Learning each other's names will be easier if they are said and heard often.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Construction paper
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Mural paper

WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL STORY BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

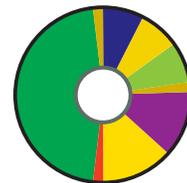
Invite kids to snip small pieces of construction paper and glue them on a piece of mural paper to create a picture.

Kids could create a cross, a mouth, trees, flowers, or footprints for the season. **Small things can make a big difference!**

Invite kids to gather near the Wall Chart.

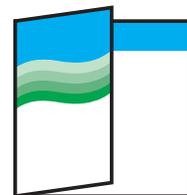
Point out today's date, season (Season after Pentecost), color (green), and icon (footprints). **Our church celebrates different seasons during the year. The Season after Pentecost is the longest season we celebrate.** Point out the entire season on the calendar. **During the Season after Pentecost, we practice doing the things Jesus did. We practice acting the way Jesus acted and speaking the way Jesus spoke. The color green reminds us of things that grow. Name some things that grow.** Allow kids to respond. Invite kids to write the names of things that grow inside the wedge. Write the word *faith*. **When we practice being like Jesus, our faith grows too.**

Stand in a circle. Have everyone say their name. Together, stick out your tongues and say, **"Here are our tongues to say kind words today."**



Pass out leaflets.

During the Season after Pentecost, we talk about growing. Have kids identify each pair of pictures on the leaflet. **What are some things seeds need to grow into plants?** (water, sun, soil) **What are some things babies need to grow into kids?** (food, love, shelter) **What kinds of things might help a church grow?** (caring community, worship, inviting friends, Sunday school for all ages) **The Season after Pentecost is a time to grow!** Collect their leaflets until Respond.



Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

The videos we will watch this year have friends whose names are Otto, Ada, Tot, Victor, Jax, Monty, and Clara. Today they have an exciting story to tell about something that happened in Sunday school. Let's watch and listen.

View Episode 1, "Robo Monty," on the Whirl Year B Fall PreK–Grade 2 DVD.

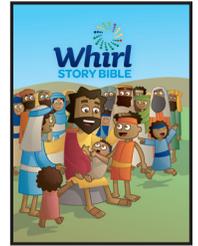
Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What really happened to Monty? (Monty's the kid with the hair that looks like a feather.)**
- **Why do you think Otto added things to the story? (Otto is the boy with the lightning bolt on his shirt.)**
- **What did Monty's story sound like when Clara finally heard it? (Clara is the girl with the bike helmet.)**
- **Do you think anyone was hurt by the made-up story? Who?**
- **Why is it important to watch what you say?**



Pass out Whirl Story Bibles to kids.

Let's find our story today! Help kids find "Small but Mighty" on page 498. Start by pointing out the graphic that shows the footprints in the green circle for the Season after Pentecost. Before you read, invite kids to look for early believers arguing, James writing a letter, and early believers saying kind words.



Read the story and Ada and Otto's questions and comments on each page.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What were some of the early believers doing in the story?
- What did a follower of Jesus do when he heard about the arguing?
- Can words be hurtful? Helpful? How?
- What do you think the early believers did after reading their letter?
- What would you write in a letter to the early believers?

Play together!

Play a game of Telephone. Invite all the kids to sit in a circle, close enough so they can whisper into each other's ears. **As we read in the story, our tongues may be small, but they have a big job to do! I am going to whisper something from the story in someone's ear. That person will listen carefully and whisper what they heard into the ear of the person sitting next to them. We'll repeat this all around the circle, then the last person will say what they heard out loud.**

Play the game a few times with different phrases. **Why did the letter writer tell the early believers to watch their tongues? Why is it important to think about the words we use before we say them? Use your words to spread love and kindness to *all* God's people.**

BIBLE BIT

- The book of James was written to Jewish Christians, making no mention of Gentiles. This dates the book to around 45 AD, making James the first book of the New Testament to be written.

WATCH IT AGAIN

- **If the story about Monty was only repeated once, it might not have gotten so out of control. How many times was the story repeated?**

OUR CHURCH

- Challenge the class to be intentional about saying something kind to at least two people at church today. Encourage kids to pay attention to the reactions people have.

RESPOND 10

Pass out leaflets and markers.

Unfold and tear off leaflet square.

1. **The letter writer to the early believers said to use words to spread love and kindness to *all* God's people. Let's make a folded-paper game to do just that!** Invite kids to write something kind to say in each of the four empty triangles.
2. Fold and then unfold the leaflet along the two orange dotted lines.
3. Turn the leaflet over to the Family Square side.
4. Fold all four corners to the middle of the leaflet along the light blue dotted lines.
5. Turn the leaflet over again.
6. Fold all four corners of the square to the middle of the leaflet along the darker green dotted lines.
7. Fold the square in half vertically, crease, and unfold.
8. Fold the square in half horizontally, crease, and unfold.
9. Push the tips of the four corners together, allowing four finger pockets to open.
10. **Put each of your thumbs and forefingers into a pocket to help you open and close the leaflet. Invite someone to choose a number and color. Open the flap and read the kind words!**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Small things can make a big difference! Small pieces of paper can make a picture. The tongue is small but can say hurtful or kind things. What did a follower of Jesus remind early believers to do? Allow kids to respond.

Pass out leaflet panels and scissors.

Cut the strip of words off the panel. Cut a slit along the blue line in the tip of the tongue. Insert the slip of paper into the slit from the back and pull. **Read the words and watch your tongue!**

Send kids out.

Stand in a circle. Have everyone say their name. Together, stick out your tongues and say, **"Here are our tongues to say kind words today."**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for my tongue. Help me to use it to say kind words. Amen.**

Thank kids for speaking kind words to each other. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.