

Taming the Tongue

TONGUE • LECTIONARY 24 • YEAR B

JAMES 3:1-12

Grades
3-4



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

Kids this age are just starting to understand symbolism. Showing an image of a boat with a rudder will help them understand today's reading.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- White paper
- Pens
- Chalk
- Scissors

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Green dot stickers

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

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Write “Kind Words” at the top of a few pieces of paper. Ask early arrivers to write words of kindness on the papers.

Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

Point out today’s date, church season, color, and icon. **Welcome to the new Sunday school year! In our class we’ll read some of the same Bible readings that we’ll hear in worship as we move through the church seasons, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.** Because Whirl starts in September each year, you’re entering the *church* year midseason. **Right now we’re a little more than halfway through the long Season after Pentecost. We celebrated the Day of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit just as summer was starting. A lot has happened in our worship readings since then.** Invite kids to mark the chart with green dot stickers. **What has happened in your lives since that day?**

Ask kids to gather in a circle and repeat Psalm 19:14 after you, pointing to their mouths and hearts at the appropriate times: **“Let the words of my mouth (point to mouth) and the meditation of my heart (point to**

heart) be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Pass out leaflets and chalk.

Use chalk to write one favorite thing you’ve heard from a teacher this year. When kids finish, encourage them to share what they’ve written.

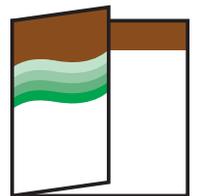
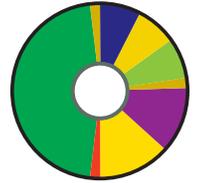
Gather kids around the screen where you’ll watch the video.

Have you ever wished right after you said something that you had kept your mouth shut? You’ll see who has that experience today.

View Episode 1 “Not So Fun Facts,” on the Whirl Year B Fall Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- What didn’t Leo understand about how he was talking to everyone?
- Why did his friends’ reactions confuse Leo?
- What’s wrong with telling the truth?
- When have you told a truth to someone that made him or her feel good?
- When have you been told a truth that hurt your feelings a little?



Pass out Whirl NRSV Bibles and help kids find James 3:1-12.

Do the Lectionary 24 Preview Activity together on page 1431 and compare responses.

Read James 3:1-12 in this creative way together: Today's reading is all about the power of the tongue! Don't let your group miss the imagery of the effect the tiny rudder has on the huge boat or of the bit's ability to control a horse. Have kids circle up and take turns reading verses with their hands cupped to make an imaginary megaphone, pointed at the person to their left.



Ask these questions after you read the story:

- Hold the tip of your tongue and try to say your name and address. What's so important about the tongue when it comes to speaking?
- What would you say is the strongest part of your body? Why?
- When has someone said something that made you feel awesome? When have you felt worse after someone talked to you?
- What good in the world can you create with the way you speak?
- How can you be more careful about how your words affect others?

BIBLE BIT

The letter of James was written to a very young church. Most people meeting a Christian at that time were meeting their *first* Christian—a good first impression mattered!

WATCH IT AGAIN

How does each character respond to Leo's "truth" about them? How is Gabe's response different?

OUR CHURCH

What are the words your church uses to greet newcomers? Look through visitor information to see the first impression it gives of your community.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out paper, pens, and scissors.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Help kids cut strips of paper no more than 1 inch wide and 8.5 inches long.
2. **On each strip of paper, write one kind word or short sentence.** If early arrivers created “Kind Words” lists, have kids begin with those.
3. **Now we’ll cut a slit to “open” the mouths of our Whirl friends Mimi and Gabe. Make a temporary vertical fold in the center of each mouth. Cut along the blue line. Unfold.**
4. **Take turns facing your Respond square toward your neighbor. Read the words on one of your “Kind Words” slips of paper as you push it through the mouth.**
5. **How often do you get to hear words like these during a day at school or home?**
6. **How often do you say words like these at school or home?**
7. **Find a partner and come up with one way to tell others about God’s love.** It might be as simple as “God loves you,” but let kids come up with ideas on their own.

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

What did you hear from me or each other today? Take time to hear kids’ responses. **We need to remember that our tongues are powerful little things—the words they create have a big impact on people around us. We also need to remember that, with God’s help, we have complete control over them! Be careful with your words.**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

Imagine you have to tell these true things to a friend. Rewrite one sentence on your back panel so that it reflects *the truth in love* instead of just *the truth*.

Send kids out.

Kids circle up and point to their mouths and hearts, repeating Psalm 19:14 after you: **“Let the words of my mouth (*point to mouth*) and the meditation of my heart (*point to heart*) be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”**

Pray together: **God, help us truly show your love to others whenever we speak. Amen.**

Thank kids for listening well and learning new ways to speak truth to each other! Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.