

Taming the Tongue

TONGUE • LECTIONARY 24 • YEAR B

JAMES 3:1-12

Grades
5-6



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 growing and maturing at different rates, and establishing a "pecking order" is often part of that process. Do your best to keep things positive between the kids in your group by showing them that what they say and how they say it are equally important.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Pencils
- Colored pencils
- Permanent marker

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Sticky notes
- Mural paper

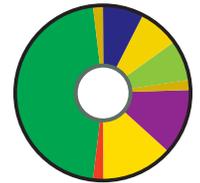
WHIRL SUPPLIES • WHIRL NRSV BIBLES • DVD • WALL CHART • LEAFLETS

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Set out sticky note pads and have kids write positive and negative ways to say the same thing. Put pieces of mural paper labeled "Positive" and "Negative" on the wall. Have kids put sticky notes on the appropriate sign.

Invite kids to look at the Wall Chart.

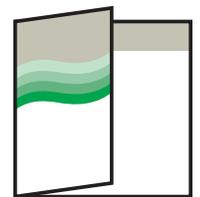
Point out today's date, church season, color, and icon. **This Wall Chart will help us keep track of our progress through the church calendar. Today is marked with green. We are in Ordinary Time, also known as the Season after Pentecost. The word *ordinary* comes from a word that means "numbered" and refers to part of the year when Sundays are counted instead of associated with a holy day. Today, we're going to look at words and how they're used. I'll draw a two-sided arrow on the Wall Chart to symbolize that words can be used to build up or to tear down.**



Say your name, school, and favorite saying. Give an example with a cliché such as "The grass is always greener on the other side." **If you can't think of one, make one up!**

Pass out leaflets and colored pencils.

Turn to someone else at your table and work together to draw something that exists to control something else. Draw a picture of it in the "What is it?" circle on your leaflet. Then follow the arrows and draw or write answers to the questions in each of the other circles. For example: If I drew a picture of handlebars in my bottom circle, what would they control? How do they help? What do you think would happen if they didn't exist? Now, you think of your own. As a team, do one for each of your leaflets. When kids finish, ask for a few volunteers to share.



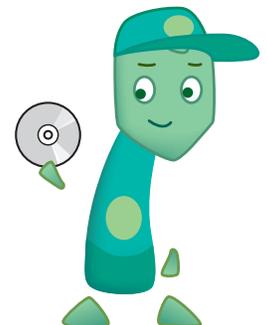
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Sometimes the words we say accidentally hurt other people. Let's watch the video and find out how Leo's words affect his friends.

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

Ask kids these questions about the video:

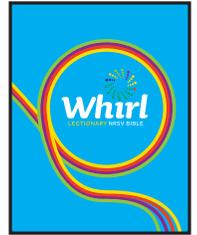
- How does Leo make the other kids upset? Does he mean to hurt their feelings?
- Has anyone ever hurt your feelings that way? What did you do?
- Have you ever accidentally hurt someone else's feelings?
- Based on his actions, what do you think Leo's "superpower" is? How do you think Leo could use his superpower for good?
- When you make a mistake, how do you prefer that people correct you?



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

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

Read James 3:1-12 in this creative way together: Ask for two volunteers to read the scripture aloud. Have them switch at the new paragraph (after "... yet it boasts of great exploits"). Have the other kids stick out their tongues every time the word *tongue* or *tongues* is used.



Ask these questions after you read the story.

- What does a bridle do? What about a ship's rudder? What do they have in common?
- What is the author really talking about when he uses the word *tongue*?
- What does the word *iniquity* mean? (Lawlessness or evil.) Why do you think the author uses *iniquity* to describe the tongue?
- Think of a time when you said something you later regretted. Did you try to take it back? If so, how?
- Sum up verses 10-12 in your own words. What is the author trying to tell you?

BIBLE BIT

The Greek word *Gehenna* is used in verse 6. Though often translated "hell," *Gehenna* is also a valley just outside the old city of Jerusalem where all the city trash was taken.

WATCH IT AGAIN

People try to "speak" when saying difficult things to those they care about. Note how Leo speaks truth versus how Gabe speaks the truth in love.

OUR CHURCH

Ask the pastor whom kids should talk to if they're concerned about something at church. Are there leadership teams or a council? Find out who runs them and how they work.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out colored pencils.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Split up into the same partner groups from earlier today.
2. This is your chance to rewrite a Whirl video!
3. With your partner, choose one of the scenes from the video on the left.
4. In the small area on the right, indicate what Leo did to make his tongue “like a fire.”
5. Then, in the large area on the right, rewrite the script—or draw pictures of things that happen—to change the outcome of the video so that no one’s feelings are hurt.
6. Take time to hear how partners chose to change the interaction between Leo and the other kids.
7. Invite partners to act out the script for their new scene.
8. For each partner group, ask questions to help them and the whole group process. For example: **How did you decide what to have the characters do? How would you react if Leo said those things to you?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

We’ve worked with words quite a bit today—not just their meanings, but also the tone and intent behind them. Take a minute to reflect on what we’ve done. What ideas stick out as important? Take time to hear kids’ responses.

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pencils.

Think of something you’ve said that hurt someone’s feelings. Write the word(s) at the megaphone’s small end. Write how you think that person heard it at the other end. Crumple the page. Notice how the words don’t disappear.

Send kids out.

Remember: “If you can’t say anything nice, hold your tongue.” Let’s say that while we literally hold our tongues. Have each kid stick out their tongue and hold it while repeating the saying a few times.

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for showing us that what we say matters. And so does how we say it. Amen.**

Thank kids for their attention and participation. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet and have them symbolically drop the “hurtful words” in the recycling bin on the way out.