



[www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com](http://www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com)

# Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

# “4 Ways to Use Words Better”

James 3:1-12; Isaiah 50:4

**VERSE DISCOVERY: James 3:1-12; Isaiah 50:4 (KJV, Public Domain)**

### Prepare

- Usually, I save the games for after the lesson, but for the opener of this one, a version of the old-fashioned game “*Simon Says*” is needed.

In the lesson introduction, you will see that I referenced this game as a set up into the lesson. Here, we can apply it.

Proceed with the game as usual, using the typical *Simon Says* prompts. Then, you will introduce a couple of times when *Simon Says* to close your mouth. At first this may seem easy, but to increase the difficulty, give your students something that will make it hard for them to keep their mouths closed.

For instance, *Simon Says* close your mouth, and then pretend you will dump a cup of milk on top of their heads and see if they respond with noises or words from their mouths, and so on. You can explore and have as much fun with this game as you want, and you can make this lesson opener as long or as short as is fitting to your class environment.

Note: You could say something along the lines of, “*As you reacted with your mouth at the prospect of me dumping milk on your head (or whatever you come up with), it is that simple for us to rashly respond to things that come our way in our everyday life. James is teaching us in today’s lesson how to not only respond, but how to respond well.*”

- Or you can do an online search for object lessons pertaining to the use of our words and mouths, taming the tongue, etc. Enjoy!

### Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 6-14

The words from our mouth can either be used to lift or tear down. Someone somewhere needs to hear a good word today. Speak Blessings – “Let your speech always be with grace. . .” Colossians 4:6.

“*Speak Blessings*” is a poem I wrote several years ago and have shared on the WordforLifeSays.com website many times. I found the words so fitting for this lesson and it is in my heart to share it once again with you here:

*“Whipping about, lashing and hateful  
This small member’s language is often fateful  
For it strips and works to tear people down  
Dropping their countenance to the ground  
How often have we participated in the mess  
When instead we could have used it to bless  
To encourage, to lift, to exalt another  
To enrich the lives of our Christian brother  
To hold, to love, to show what’s right  
Instead we often use it to fight  
Wouldn’t it have been just as easy still  
To bless according to God’s holy will  
To show favor over mocking disdain  
And love over inflicting pain  
To build and nurture a life within  
Instead of participating in this deadly sin  
Whose pride causes a boast of self  
Instead of nurturing to spiritual health  
Speak blessings and help a life to grow  
And you’ll reap the rewards from that life you did sow”*

(©WordforLifeSays)

When we seek to bless others with the words that come from our mouth, we are investing in that person in a way that material things cannot. When we decide to make it our mission that people will be blessed by what they hear from us, you will see countenances change, you will see the discouraged become encouraged. And you may see some, whom upon hearing those edifying words, come to life in a new way right before your eyes.

### Activities

- God is looking for agents of hope. People who know how to use their words in a way that edifies and lifts others, and not tear them down.

From a short devotional, I expressed these words:

*"I am a lifter.*

*I am an encourager.*

*I am a builder of my brother.*

*I am a minister of my sister.*

*I am an agent of hope to the downtrodden speaking words of inspiration about His freedom.*

*I am a promoter of grace, sharing words of deliverance to my war-worn sibling of the spirit.*

*I am a supporter of peace who chooses to use the mouth and the words God gives me to speak light, life, and love." (© "I am a lifter.../WordforLifeSays.com)*

If you were to add additional words promoting the idea of being a lifter or an agent of hope, what would you write? Use the **Adult Journal Page** to write your suggestions. For the **Kid's Journal Page**, have students write ways they can encourage other people with the words they speak.

- Younger students can draw a picture of themselves using kind words to encourage a friend using the **Draw the Scene** sheet found on site. In the space provided, they can write the words they spoke to their friend.
- **Speaking Collage Craft:** This craft is perfect if you have old newspaper comics strips laying around. Cut them out and glue onto construction paper to make a collage of many different ones together (I prefer the ones with word balloons on them to demonstrate speaking). In the middle, attach our cut-out picture verse printable for James 3:10 declaring, *"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."* (James 3:10 picture verse printable found on site.)
- Alternate activity sheets available such as **Word Search, Memory Verse, and more** can be found on site for those who just want to work with printed materials.

### Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."* Isaiah 50:4**
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 15)

### Life

Throughout this week, make it your mission to use your mouth as a vessel for ministry. Plan to sow seeds of encouragement in the lives of others. Take some time and think about the people you come across in your weekly routine. What comes to mind when you think about each one? How can you bless them with the words of your mouth when you see them? Write down your thoughts and be intentional about spreading the verbal love throughout this week.

TOPIC:

## “4 Ways to Use Words Better”

James 3:1-12; Isaiah 50:4

### VERSE DISCOVERY: James 3:1-12; Isaiah 50:4 (KJV, Public Domain)

*Simon says, “Close your mouth!” We all know the game. Whatever Simon tells us to do, we do it lest we fear being counted out. Oh, if only it were that easy to take command of some of our loose actions in life, such as ones that regard the mouth. And yet, throughout the Bible, we are commanded to use our speech patterns in healthy and productive ways. Not to be instruments for destruction and tearing one another down.*

*There is so much power bound up in the way that we talk. Proverbs 18:21 tells us, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” Whatever is produced from our lips generates fruit. Stuff grows, for the good or the bad, from what we say.*

*James is admonishing us to be mindful of the words that come out of our mouth for with them we can lift someone’s day, or we can emotionally kill them.*

*What we say makes a difference in the lives of others. Our mouths are vessels of influence.*

*James 3 unpacks the truth of the power of the tongue and how people of faith should be cautious in how they unleash it.*

*Using Isaiah 50:4 as a companion Scripture with those found in James 3, this lesson will uncover four ways all of us can strive to use our words better.*

### 1. REALIZING THE WEIGHT OF YOUR WORDS

**James 3:1 “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”**

At the beginning of this lesson, I believe this is where many of us drop the ball, so to speak, in trying to improve our speech patterns toward others. Many do not realize the weight of the words they speak and the impact those very words can have on the hearers. Even if one is not trying

NOTES:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

to be purposely offensive, they would do well to think before speaking, asking oneself if the words that are about to come out of my mouth, necessary and/or helpful. This step none can overlook, whether they are leaders or laypeople. The responsibility of our words is just that, our responsibility.

So, starting with the leaders, James teaches, **“Be not many masters.”** When it comes to bearing any title of leadership, often many will focus on prestige and tend to overlook the responsibility that comes with the job. The Bible warns us, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more” (Luke 12:48). There is a higher level of accountability for **“masters”** or “teachers.” Those endowed with the power to magnify the gospel in such a way must be particularly careful in how they use words.

Words are powerful and need to be measured out carefully. One of the devices that Jesus’s enemies tried to employ against Him was to catch or trap Him in what He said. Matthew 22:15 says, “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.” One’s words can testify for or against an individual. **“Masters”** and those in leadership carry the added weight of accountability for their words for the increased impact they can make.

This office is not to be taken lightly, for James said, **“Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”** At this level, there is a higher standard of living expected for the one who bears the title, and James included himself in this by saying, **“we”**. Proverbs 10:11 says, “The mouth of the righteous man is a well of life.” Those who belong to God and work at sharing His word must especially be careful that what is coming out of them is speaking “life” to the ears of the hearers (more on this later).

**James 3:2 “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”**

In your mind, raise your hand if you have ever messed up or **“offend”** another. One of the easiest ways to **“offend”** and harm another is through the mouth. People often speak rashly in the heat of the moment and without carefully considering the impact their words have on another. These emotional outbursts cause us to come up with phrases like “My mouth ran away with me” and so forth. On those occasions, the use of the mouth was not employed as a tool for edifying, rather just the opposite.

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

But the one that can control his speech is considered “**a perfect man.**” Since the tongue is often known as “running away” on its own, the one that exercises great restraint over this defiant member is considered “**able also to bridle the whole body.**” It is the taming of what some view as being untamable. He or she who can moderate or put limits on something so difficult to deal with can often show great restraint in other areas of life. “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth His life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction,” is what we find in Proverbs 13:3a. If one can keep their mouth under control, they can often hold tight elsewhere, avoiding destructive patterns that would work to tear them down.

In both verses quoted above, we see the weight of words and their impact is the sole responsibility of the one speaking, regardless of their title or not. What we say out of our mouths carries so much with it and, it would behoove us to use our words wisely, chew on it a bit before we say it, and think critically, if what we are about to say is needful for that particular moment.

## 2. LEARN TO TAME THE TONGUE

**James 3:3-4 “Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.”**

James gives us the best possible illustrations on the power of the tongue by referencing it to two things his readers, as well as modern-day readers, can easily understand. Through these two examples: one of a horse and another of a ship, James shows that man has, down through the years, discovered ways to bring these powerful objects under control. For the horse, it is using a “**bit**” in its mouth and, for a ship, “**a very small helm.**”

Both instruments are used for controlling other things. They both direct the course of which way the operator wants each to go, be it a rider or “**the governor.**” Both are great examples of how these large, and strong objects, can be made to comply with the will of the one who is controlling that little, vital piece. If there are these little things that can move great objects into obeisance at its master’s will, what more of the little tongue?

### NOTES:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**James 3:5-6 “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”**

Just as those little instruments are applied to the horse and ships, the body has a little thing that tries to control it also: **“the tongue.”**

First, it **“boasteth great things.”** The tongue edifies itself. It magnifies the capabilities of its owner whether or not they really can do something. The tongue is swollen with pride. Have you ever seen an owner walk a little tiny dog with the biggest yipper on it, tugging and tugging the leash? Or have you walked past a yard to the tune of relentless barking thanks to a peewee-sized dog? These little ones are tenacious in letting you know who they are. These pint-sized sweeties have no problem in letting the world know that they are here, and they mean business.

Our tongues often act in the same way. It is so small, and it has so much to bark about. Yet, this barking, used in a nonproductive and selfish way, makes a lot of noise, and can lead to great destruction.

Secondly, James taught, **“how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire.”** It only takes a small flame to bring on a raging inferno. I often watch coverage on the news of fires that burn uncontrollably. They are huge. They are massive walls of orange-red destruction, eating and devouring everything in its path. But they never start out that big. Their origin is relatively small in comparison to the size they have grown to be.

James said, **“And the tongue is a fire.”** The tongue can be the source of destruction that wreaks havoc on the things that get in its way. It can chop and devour until it has consumed some with sorrow and some with despair when wrongly used. The tongue can lash out and cause irreparable damage to the ears of its hearer if not used properly.

James described it as **“a world of iniquity.”** Proverbs 10:19 says, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” A lot of running off at the mouth gives many opportunities for sin to rear its ugly head. When the tongue is let loose, it lashes about without regard for hurt, feelings, or the devastation it leaves behind. Like a whirling tornado, it ravishes, spinning around and around in sinfulness, wiping out all in its path.

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Without restraint, all it knows how to do is upheaval. Without being restrained, the tongue **“defileth the whole body.”** Jesus taught, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh,” (Luke 6:45). With that, we see that whatever comes out of the mouth, gives evidence to what already resides in the heart or the **“body.”**

**James 3:7-8 “For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”**

Man, through the blessed ingenuity that God has given him, has developed ways to tame just about everything. Yes, our lesson focuses on the taming of animals and birds, right down to the taming of serpents. But, when we think about it, man has been able to take control of or tame many more things. Since the Bible days, man has even found ways to harness energy through many means, including using the sun’s power. Man has developed many ways to use the power of nature, such as wind and water, to harness their energies to benefit humanity.

Though he has been able to do so many feats (think of all the inventions through the years), the Bible says, **“the tongue can no man tame.”** It speaks to the **“unruly evil”** that it truly is. It testifies to the power that it holds in its little self. It is liken as being **“full of deadly poison.”** Its work can destroy to the point of no return. No wonder James’s warning is so strong and so severe. Christians must learn how to put reins on this evil and stop its destructive ways.

Taming the tongue begins with not only monitoring one’s mouth but the things in the heart. For the mouth cannot speak what the heart is not feeling. Proverbs commands us, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (4:23). The word “keep” can be used in the same sense as “guard” or “monitor.” When the heart is kept and dealt with rightly, so too will the words which flow from it.

One day, each one of us will give an account for everything that proceeds from our mouths (Matthew 12:36-37). As God’s children, we must not be reckless in the use of our words. Taming the tongue means working hard to make sure your mouth is as a “well of life” (Proverbs 10:11) and that the words we speak be words of grace and helpful to the hearers thereof (Colossians 4:6; see also Ephesians 4:29).

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 3. SPEAK TO GIVE LIFE

**James 3:9-10** “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

In the beginning, God spoke His most beautiful words of creation: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” (Genesis 1:26). Verse 27 goes on to say, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” These words professed the climax of His creation. These words speak volumes of the love relationship that God wanted to have with man who was made “in his own image,” or as today’s lesson says, “**after the similitude of God.**”

“**Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.**” The conundrum of man is that we love the Lord and seek to bless Him, but sometimes our attitude toward His creation, our fellow man, can cause us to have disgruntled feelings that may turn to cursing. “**These things ought not so to be,**” James said. That is not the way we are to behave toward one another.

1 John 4:20 says it like this, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Love for God and hate toward man equals “**blessing**” and “**cursing.**” Those two cannot, and should not, exist together. They are incompatible roommates. They are not a good fit to dwell in the same domain with each other.

**James 3:11-12** “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”

To further illustrate this puzzling aspect of man to try and bless and curse from the same vessel, James points out things in nature that cannot happen, that are incompatible. First, he uses “**water**” to demonstrate. Can a water fountain bring sweet water and bitter from the same place? Can a fountain have both salt water and fresh water? The answer is an obvious no. The same is true for looking for olives on the fig tree or figs on a vine where grapes would be. It does not happen.

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Nature is not confused about what it is to produce. A fig tree is designed by God to bear fig fruit. The same is true for olives and such. If nature knows what it should produce, so should the Christians to whom James is writing. They are to not act out of character to the way that God designed them.

In dealing with our speech toward others, we must be mindful of building up rather than tearing down. Proverbs 15:4 reminds us that, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life...” Think about that for a minute. The words that we speak about and to one another can bring healing to a hurting soul. That is powerful! Our speech goes beyond just saying words; they exhibit and send forth “life.”

Who are we raising to “life” with a timely and sincere word? Are people enriched for the good when they sit down to have a chat with us or do they walk away feeling extra heavy and burdened down? These things make a difference. Not only do they make a difference to the one whom we are conversing with, but they also speak for us how closely we are walking in tune with our Savior and how He dealt with individuals daily. On that note, on to our fourth point in this lesson.

## 4. MIMIC THE SPEECH OF JESUS

**Isaiah 50:4 “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”**

If one seems to come short of all other attempts to use productive and positive speech patterns, all you have to do is look at Jesus and see what He did and how He communicated to those He came into contact with.

If one is going to learn how to use the tongue healthily, the best example is that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had all the right words at the right time. He knew how to speak compassion when it was needed most. He knew how to speak conviction in truth without berating another. And Jesus knew how to speak life.

Jumping out of the New Testament and going back to the old, there we see the prophesied Servant, whom we know to be the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Isaiah 50:4, He talks about the words He uses and the way He uses them to speak. There He says, “**The**

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary...”**

It amazes me how many people think they have something to offer and are quick to verbalize those very thoughts and ideas. Never do we see Jesus in the Bible using words in a frivolous or lackadaisical manner. We have already expressed the preciousness of words and how they are used, and Jesus, just as His Father, knew the value of words and used them as such.

Jesus’ heart was always, and I do mean always, to do the will of the Father (John 6:38). In everything, right down to going to the cross, God’s will was His number one priority (Luke 22:42). With the will of God governing His whole life and ministry, even the words He spoke had to be what **“The Lord GOD hath given me.”**

In Isaiah, that which was given is described as **“the tongue of the learned”**; as one who had been taught by God what to say and how to say it. You can speak something true, but how the message is delivered can affect how one receives it or not.

In John 12:50, Jesus said, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

Jesus never used words in a fly-away fashion. With everything He spoke, it was either with a purpose, for a purpose, or to fulfill a purpose – or all three in one.

When we think of “with a purpose”, we can think along the lines of healing, miracles, and deliverances. Jesus, in those instances, spoke with the intent to deliver an individual from some illness, spiritual oppression, or to perform a miracle such as the feeding of the five thousand.

When we think in terms of “for a purpose”, we can think along the lines of the parables He taught. In those instances, He spoke for His audience to gain a greater understanding of something, particularly Kingdom principles.

And, when we think in terms of Jesus speaking to “fulfill a purpose”, we can easily associate this with prophecies such as the one He spoke from the cross: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Those exact words open the Messianic psalm found in Psalm 22:1.

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

By the way, the verses quoted above in John 12:49, 50 could also be looked at in a fulfilling fashion because they fulfilled our verse of study in Isaiah 50:4 regarding the use of His speech.

Jesus used His words with exactness and preciseness. Back in Isaiah, we see His words were carefully chosen **“that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”** The right words at the right time, especially for the weary worn, are a special kind of sweetness to a soul that dreadfully needs it. Proverbs 16:24 says, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones,” and nobody could do this better than the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “...the word that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,” (John 6:63).

Then, in Isaiah, He goes on to explain, **“he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”** It was a daily thing for Jesus to have His ear tuned into the Father’s mouth, to hear what He has to say and express the very words He **“learned.”**

In concluding this lesson, this last section may seem overwhelming in learning to speak like Jesus in this manner. But, if we take everything into consideration and then look at what James taught earlier in his book: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:” (James 1:19), following this, may help us to learn to have an ear as the Servant (Jesus), and be able to speak with words of grace (Ephesians 4:29).

Our words are powerful! As this lesson shows, they can be used to hurt or to heal; to edify or to tear down. James wants us to choose life with the words that we speak. He wants us to take the high road and control of what is coming out of our mouths. If we need help, we can pray the prayer of the psalmist and say, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

What we say and how we talk to one another really does matter. It is all about how we use our words and to learn daily to use them better.

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TOPIC:**

## “4 Ways to Use Words Better”

**James 3:1-12; Isaiah 50:4**

**Please Answer the Review Questions Below**

1. **T or F.** There is a greater responsibility on masters, leaders, and teachers on how they use their words. (James 3:1)
2. “If any man offend not in word, he is a \_\_\_\_\_ man.” (James 3:2)  
**A. Perfect      B. Careful      C. Blessed      D. None**
3. Why do you think the tongue is compared to a “**Fire**”? (James 3:5-6)

---

---

---

---

4. What are some things that mankind has been able to “**Tame**” other than the tongue? (James 3:3-4, 7)

---

---

5. “Out of the same \_\_\_\_\_ proceedeth blessing and cursing.” (James 3:10)

**A. Heart      B. Mouth      C. Life      D. None**

6. **T or F.** The best way we can learn to control what comes out of our mouths is to mimic the way Jesus used His speech. (Isaiah 50:4)

7. Why do you think it is hard for many to take control over the way they use their words? Is there any advice you would offer to one who is struggling in this area?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

