

(in)FORMATION

GAINING INFORMATION FROM JAMES, SO WE CAN BE IN FORMATION LIKE JESUS.



NEW LIFE CHRISTIAN CENTER
September 20, 2026

A BIT, A RUDDER, A SPARK
Pastor Dave Larson | Turlock
Pastor Jeremy Moore | Patterson

Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. James 3:1-2 (NLT)

1. My words have _____.

We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself. James 3:3-6 (NLT)

The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences. Proverbs 18:21 (NLT)

2. My words _____ the real me.

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring. James 3:7-12 (NLT)

For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. Matthew 12:34 (NLT)

Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips. Psalms 141:3 (NLT)

3. I will choose _____ on purpose.

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. James 3:13-16 (NLT)

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness. James 3:17-18 (NLT)

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1. My words have POWER.

We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself. James 3:3-6 (NLT)

The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences. Proverbs 18:21 (NLT)

2. My words REFLECT the real me.

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring. James 3:7-12 (NLT)

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Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips. Psalms 141:3 (NLT)

3. I will choose HEAVENLY WISDOM on purpose.

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. James 3:13-16 (NLT)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
September 20, 2026

CONNECT

What's one saying or comment someone said to you (or that you said to someone) that you still remember years later, for better or worse?

ENGAGE

What impacted you the most personally from the message?

GROW

1. James 3:1-2 says that if we could control our tongues, we'd be perfect. Why do you think our words are such an accurate measuring stick for spiritual maturity, more so than things like Bible knowledge or church attendance?
2. Think of a "bit," "rudder," or "spark" moment...a small comment that had an effect (good or bad) on a relationship, a reputation, or your own self-image. What happened?
3. King David prayed in Psalm 141:3, "Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips," not just "help me hold it in." What's the difference between those two prayers?
4. Read Matthew 12:34 together ("For whatever is in your heart determines what you say"). Why is it easier to try to control our words directly than to let God work on the heart underneath them? What might it look like practically to invite God into that deeper work this week?
5. James contrasts earthly wisdom (jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder) with heavenly wisdom (pure, peace-loving, gentle, full of mercy) in James 3:13-18. Which of the "fruits" of heavenly wisdom do you find hardest to live out, and in what kind of situation?

LEAD (YOURSELF)

What usually gets in the way of you pausing before you respond? What would help you build that pause into your daily life?