

# James Teaches Us to Control Our Tongues

## Lesson 41

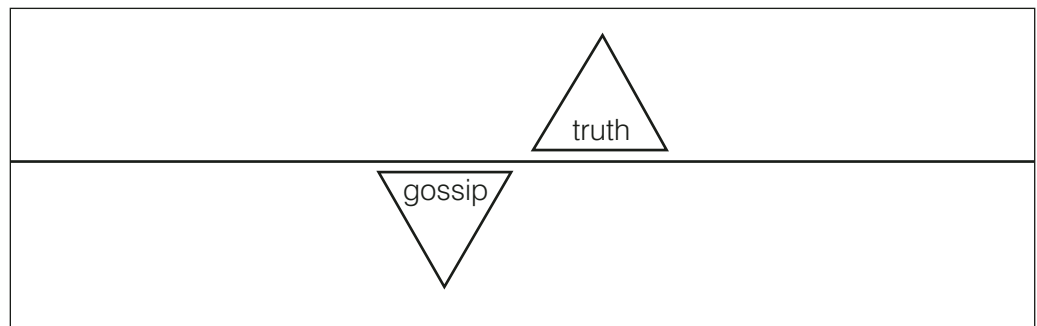
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**Purpose** To help the children learn to control the things they say and think.

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**Preparation**

1. Prayerfully study Matthew 5:33–37, James 1:26, 3:2–13, 5:12, 1 Peter 3:10, Exodus 20:7, and Mosiah 4:30. Then study the lesson and decide how you want to teach the children the scripture account. (See “Preparing Your Lessons,” p. vi, and “Teaching from the Scriptures,” p. vii.)
2. Select the discussion questions and enrichment activities that will involve the children and best help them achieve the purpose of the lesson.
3. Cut several pieces of paper into triangles. Write each of the following words or phrases on a triangle that is pointing down: *gossip, false witness, lies, quarreling, swearing, taking the name of the Lord in vain, angry words*. Write each of the following words or phrases on a triangle that is pointing up: *kind words, compliments, polite words, truth, prayer, peacemaking*.



4. Materials needed:
  - a. A Bible or a New Testament for each child.
  - b. Tape (or something similar) to attach the triangles to the chalkboard.

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**Suggested  
Lesson  
Development**

Invite a child to give the opening prayer.

**Attention Activity**

Divide the children in your class into small groups and have each group act out how to control a horse, a bicycle, a dog on a walk, a car, a boat, or other similar things. Have the other children guess what the group is doing.

- What would happen if someone couldn't control these things?

Explain that in this lesson the children will learn about controlling something they always have with them. It is part of their body, but it is not their hands or feet.

- What do you think it might be?

Ask the children to listen for this part of the body as you read James 3:3–5.

- What does this scripture tell us about our tongues?

#### Scripture Account

Teach the children the accounts in Matthew 5:33–37, James 1:26, 3:2–13, and 1 Peter 3:10. (For suggested ways to teach the scripture account, see “Teaching from the Scriptures,” p. vii.) Explain that speaking guile means trying to deceive or trick others. Help the children understand that even though the tongue is a small part of the body, they must work very hard to control it.

#### Discussion and Application Questions

Study the following questions and the scripture references as you prepare your lesson. Use the questions you feel will best help the children understand the scriptures and apply the principles in their lives. Reading the references with the children in class will help them gain insights into the scriptures.

- What does it mean to bridle our tongues? (James 1:26.) Why could we control our whole body if we could control our tongue? (James 3:2.)
- Why can't a natural fountain send forth both sweet water and bitter water or salt water and fresh water? (James 3:11–12.) What did James mean when he said a fig tree can't produce olives and a vine can't produce figs? (James 3:12.) What was he trying to teach us with these examples? (James 3:10.)
- What happens to us when we start saying unkind things or speaking harshly? How do you think this affects the good things we say?
- What commandments did Jesus give us about what and how we should speak? (Matthew 5:33–37.) Why do you think it is important for us to keep these commandments?

Draw a horizontal line on the chalkboard. Place the triangles face down on the table, and have each child choose one, read it, and tape it on the top of the line if the arrow points up and on the bottom of the line if the arrow points down. (See the illustration in the “Preparation” section.)

- Discuss each word as the child places the triangle on the line. Discuss why the things above the line are positive things to say and why the things below the line are negative. How do you feel when you say something kind to someone or about someone? How do you feel when you give someone a compliment? Why does saying good things about others make us feel good about ourselves, too?
- What do the Ten Commandments tell us about how we are to speak about the Lord? (Exodus 20:7.) Why is it important for us to speak only reverently of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ? How does keeping this commandment help us become more like Heavenly Father and Jesus? (You might retell President Spencer W. Kimball's story from lesson 8.)
- How do we control our tongues and our actions? Help the children understand that what we think and feel determines what we say and do. By controlling our thoughts, we can control what we say. How can we control our thoughts? Discuss the following suggestions:

Ask yourself, “What would Jesus have me do in this situation?”

Think of a favorite scripture.

Sing or hum a Primary song or a hymn aloud or in your mind.

Pray for help.

Remember you are a child of God.

Think of what your parents would want you to do.

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**Enrichment  
Activities**

You may use one or more of the following activities any time during the lesson or as a review, summary, or challenge.

1. Tell the following story about Joseph Smith (you might ask someone who reads well to record the story on an audiocassette):

Joseph Smith was put in prison many times by men who did not like him, even though they could never prove that he had done anything wrong. One night he and some other men were being kept in a cold and miserable prison where they had to wear chains around their ankles and sleep on the hard floor. They were trying to sleep, but the guards were talking very loudly. They were swearing and telling each other about all the terrible things they had done to members of the Church.

After listening to this terrible talk, Joseph suddenly jumped up and said to the men, "Silence. . . . In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language." The guards dropped their weapons and begged him to forgive them. They were quiet the rest of the night. (See Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 209–11.)

- What could you do if someone near you is swearing or telling a vulgar story?
2. Thread a ring or small spool on a long string and tie a knot in the ends of the string. Have the class members stand in a circle and hold on to the string. Choose one child to be in the center of the circle. Have the other children pass the ring or spool from hand to hand. When you say "Stop," have the person with the ring say something good about the child in the center. Then have the child in the middle exchange places with the one who said the nice thing and go on with the game. Continue until everyone has had a turn to be in the center. You may want to add a positive comment about each child. Talk about how we feel when we say good things and how we feel when something good is said about us. (If your class is too small for this activity, have each child say something good about the others.)
  3. Compare one bad thought to the little iron wedge in the following story President Spencer W. Kimball told about a young boy who lived on a farm:  
  
One day as a young boy was coming in from the field, he found an iron wedge. (Explain what a wedge looks like.) He knew he was late for dinner, so instead of taking the wedge to the woodshed where it belonged, he laid it between the limbs of a young walnut tree his father had planted near the front gate. He intended to take the wedge out of the tree later and return it to the shed, but he never did. The wedge stayed there for years, and the tree grew around it until it became a very large tree.

Many years later on a wintry night, freezing rain broke off one of the three major limbs of the big tree. This unbalanced the rest of the tree so that it also fell down. When the storm was over, not a twig of the tree remained standing.

Early the next morning, the farmer—the boy grown older—went out and saw the damaged walnut tree. He thought, “I wouldn’t have had that happen for a thousand dollars. That was the prettiest tree in the valley.”

The farmer had forgotten about the wedge, but it was still there. Even though the tree had grown tall, the wedge had weakened it. The tree normally would have stood through the storm, but because of the wedge, placed there many years before, the tree was not as strong as it should have been. The wedge caused the tree to fall and break. (See Samuel T. Whitman, “Forgotten Wedges,” quoted by Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, pp. 70–71.)

- How are bad thoughts like a wedge? When we have a bad thought, it can work its way deeper into our minds, like the wedge in the tree, and become a big problem for us. We should get rid of bad thoughts immediately.
4. Discuss Proverbs 23:7. Include in the discussion ways the children can control their tempers, such as counting to ten when they get hurt or angry.
  5. Sing or read the words to “Hum Your Favorite Hymn” (*Children’s Songbook*, p. 152).

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## Conclusion

Testimony	Testify that learning to control our tongues is one of the things we must do to become like Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Share an experience when saying good things rather than bad helped you or someone you know feel closer to the Lord. Encourage the children to try to control what they say during the coming week.
Suggested Home Reading	Suggest that the children study James 3:3–10 at home as a review of this lesson.  Invite a child to give the closing prayer.