

# SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

**September 15-16**

**Wrangling Over Words**

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## What Is This?

This brief guide is intended for use individually, or in small groups. It's your chance to dive deeper into the issues raised in the weekend sermon and to connect a Biblical story with your daily life.

## Revisit the Text

James 3:1-12; <https://bit.ly/2D82Hwd>

## Big Ideas Raised

- The Letter of James is a virtual smorgasbord of visual images that illustrate the power of words: It's about bridles and horse's bits, rudders that steer ships, sparks that ignite massive forest fires, and the irony of our ability to train animals to do almost anything, and our inability to tame our own tongues. It's about tongues that both bless and curse, like springs that gush both fresh and bitter water, and the plainspoken logic of fig trees that only bear figs and sea water that's always salty and never fresh.
- It's important we realize words lie at the base of most of what happens in the world. Words make things happen! Sometimes it's the most simple of words that cause the most dramatic changes in things. Simple words like, "You're *not* pretty" or "I *hate* you" or "You're *the most wonderful thing* to ever happen to me!" The Bible tells us words have meaning and things happen as a result of them.
- In our lifetimes, the word in its oral and written forms have gone digital as electronic impulses form images and connections in mind-bending ways. Something James could not have anticipated, social media has come into being and the whole world has changed. Facebook was created in a dorm room at Harvard 15 years ago and 2.2 billion of the world's population are now connected. The various platforms of social media create forums that bring people to exchange ideas, connect with, relate to, and mobilize for a shared cause. But ironically social media is quickly "turning us into the most antisocial generation" in history.<sup>1</sup>

## Questions Meant to Dig Deeper

- We all know that we hold great power in the way we use language. In the sermon, there's a story of a woman who comes to St. Francis to confess that she has told rumors of a neighbor and Francis cuts open a feather pillow to illustrate how those words have scattered to the 4 winds and are beyond her control. Has this happened to you? Have you said something that was hurtful and realized how it's nearly impossible to reverse?
- What about a time when you said something that made the difference for someone? Something that was healing or reassuring? Something that helped someone understand how truly loved they are?
- Is there a habit you might develop to help you make improvements in this area of life?

## Revisit the Sermon

For a recording or a manuscript of this weekend's sermon, please visit:

<https://www.stlucasucc.org/sermons-resources>

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Amedie, "The Impact of Social Media on Society," Santa Clara University, Scholar Commons, 9/3/15, [https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.searchencrypt.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1002&context=engl\\_176](https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.searchencrypt.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1002&context=engl_176)