

TWEAKING OUR TWEETS

Three simple steps that can help us grow

1

SCRIPTURE

- Not many of you should presume to be **teachers**, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1 NIV)
- We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a **perfect man**, able to keep his whole body in check. (James 3:2 NIV)

2

SCRIPTURE

- When we put **bits** into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. (James 3:3 NIV)
- Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very **small rudder** wherever the pilot wants to go. (James 3:4 NIV)

3

SCRIPTURE

- Likewise the **tongue** is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. (James 3:5 NIV)
- The tongue also is a **fire**, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the **whole course of his life on fire**, and is itself set on fire by hell. (James 3:6 NIV)
- All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being **tamed** and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless **evil**, full of deadly poison. (James 3:7–8 NIV)

4

SCRIPTURE

- With the **tongue** we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. (James 3:9 NIV)
- Out of the same mouth come **praise** and **cursing**. My brothers, this should not be. (James 3:10 NIV)
- Can both **fresh water** and **salt water** flow from the same spring? (James 3:11 NIV)
- My brothers, can a **fig tree** bear olives, or a **grapevine** bear figs? Neither can a **salt** spring produce fresh water. (James 3:12 NIV)

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INTRODUCTION

- Have you ever **said** something you later regretted?
- Truth of the matter is that we've all done it.
- Ever had the opportunity to **immediately** take it back?
- Not likely, unless, of course, you said it on **Twitter**.



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INTRODUCTION

- **Twitter** is a social media platform that allows people to dump their thoughts on the world in 280 characters or less.
- It used to be 140 characters, but last year the platform expanded that capacity because, people wanted to have more **opportunity** to speak their minds and, sometimes, put their digital feet in their mouths.



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INTRODUCTION

- In fact, as many of you know, the **President of the United States** is a dedicated twitter user.
- Whereas previous presidents often got their **messages** out via a speech or a press conference, these days we are more likely to hear instantly whatever is on the mind of the leader of the free world.



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INTRODUCTION

- The instant nature of **Twitter** allows someone to run at the mouth (er, keyboard) immediately in response to something they've read, seen or experienced.
- Sometimes that means that **one's fingers** engage faster than one's brain.
- The result is often a major **faux pas** (embarrassing mistake) that is very public.
- If you're **quick** enough, however, you can immediately delete the tweet and pull back your verbal misstep.

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INTRODUCTION

- This happened when the **U.S. Department of Education** posted a tweet in which a word was misspelled.
- The tweet was deleted, and then reposted as follows: "Post updated — our **deepest apologizes** for the earlier typo."
- After **Mariah Carey's lip sync failure** on New Year's Eve 2017, singer **Josh Groban** tweeted: "*Any time one of the greatest voices of my generation lip syncs, an angel loses its wings.*"
- The tweet set off a **firestorm** among Carey fans that forced Groban to delete the tweet and apologize.

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THE WRONG WORD

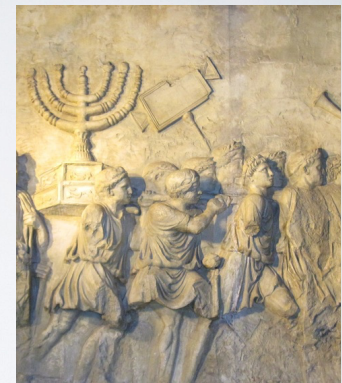
- We are often prone to **saying things** without thinking first, whether online or in person.
- The **Apostle James** addresses this human tendency to let **loose talk** run rampant, even in the pre-Twitter world of the first century.



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THE WRONG WORD

- The Apostle James wrote his epistle to **Jewish Christians** in a tense situation.
- **Economic problems** in the Roman world, **in-fighting** among different factions of Jews and the **growing revolutionary resistance** of the Zealots in Judea had put everyone on edge.
- In just a few years after James wrote these words, a **powder keg of violence** would be lit when the Zealots revolted against Rome in A.D. 66.
- It was a **disaster**, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.



12

THE WRONG WORD

- James' concern is to help his brothers and sisters in **“the Dispersion”** live with integrity and represent Christ in a world that seemed to be going off the rails.
- Like their ancestors in the **Exile**, these new Christians needed to learn how to live as aliens in a foreign land.



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THE WRONG WORD

- It's little wonder, then, that one of James' **primary concerns** is the use of words.
- In a volatile environment, the **wrong word** can be the match that lights the fuse of violence, strife and misunderstanding.
- **“The tongue is a fire,”** says James, that is “set on fire by hell” (v. 6).
- Unlike a tweet that can be deleted, thus potentially limiting the damage, the **wrong word** said in the wrong situation can create an uncontrollable blaze that will consume a community and cause irreparable harm.



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TEACHERS RESTRAINT

- James begins this section by warning **teachers** that their position of honor and certain privileges does not necessarily mean they gain **special immunity**.
- “Not many of you should become teachers,” says James, “for you know that we who teach will be **judged with greater strictness**” (v. 3:1).
- Teachers who teach things that are not consistent with the **Gospel of God** have a great potential to do wrong and not only mislead people but do much harm to their faith.
- Therefore teachers and their **tongue (teaching)** are held, understandably, to a higher standard.



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THE TONGUE

- Not only should Teacher's watch their **tongues**, but should all believers.
- For the words that come out of our mouth or on **Twitter, Facebook,** or **Instagram** can be extremely dangerous and hazardous instruments for evil.
- Just as a forest is set ablaze by a small spark, so can **our world be set on blaze**, by the words that come out of our mouths or even on print.



16

THE TONGUE

- When our speech is out of control, it is likened to a **wild animal**.
- But even though people have found ways to domesticate all kinds of animals, birds, and other creatures, no one has found a way to **tame the tongue**—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.
- Nevertheless, when we control our tongue we are called a **“perfect man”** or someone who is mature in the faith.

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THE TONGUE

- What is also ironic about all of this is some people praise God with their **tongue** and then turn around and criticize and curse their fellow man.
- According to the Apostle James, **“My brothers, this should not be.”** (James 3:10 NIV)

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- So, how can we learn to **“tame” our tongues** to speak in ways that edify instead of sparking dissension and setting our lives on fire?
- Well, as the Apostle James implies, it begins with considering **how we think before we speak**.
- That’s an especially **important skill** in a world where Twitter storms and nasty rhetoric seem to be the norm.



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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- As Christians, we need to **uphold** a different way of speaking that is controlled and that emerges from the deep well of God’s wisdom.
- In other words, we need to engage the **brain** and the **Spirit** before we engage the tongue.

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

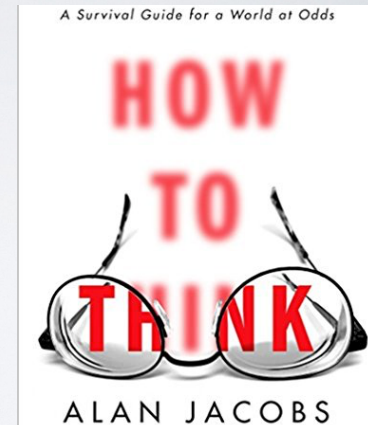
- A recent book by Baylor University professor **Alan Jacobs** offers great advice for how to repair the connection between the **brain** and the **tongue**.
- When someone posts an outrageous tweet, we're prone to wonder, **“What were they thinking?”**
- Chances are, they weren't.



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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- Jacobs suggests that we all need to relearn **how to think** before we engage the **process of how to speak**.
- In his book, How to Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds, Jacobs seems to be building on James' advice when he offers his **“Thinking Person's Checklist”** of good things to remember before we engage our tongues.
- While Jacobs lists **12 ideas** for better thinking, we might summarize those ideas by boiling them down to three main categories.



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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- **FIRST, BE SLOW!**
- In a world of instant messaging, Twitter and sound bites, it's tempting to react quickly when confronted with an idea or a provocation.
- The **emotions** want to immediately **fight** or **flee** (or, in the case of Twitter, retweet or bang out a 280-character response).
- But Jacobs suggests that when we're **tempted** to respond quickly we should, instead, give it five minutes.

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- Take a **walk**, make **dinner**, do some **deep breathing** — whatever it takes to get your body involved.
- When our **bodies are moving**, our brains tend to have time to process.
- Forgo the need for an **instant response** to that nasty email or “idiotic” tweet.

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- Consider not **responding at all**.
- Good and wise **thinkers** focus on thinking and responding about the right things, **not** about every thing.
- As James says earlier in the letter: *“Let everyone be **quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger**; for your **anger does not produce God’s righteousness**”* (James 1:19).

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- **SECOND, BE TEACHABLE!**
- Jacobs suggests that one of the reasons we are so **quick to respond** to things in a Twitter culture is that others are watching and we want to **impress** our like-minded friend group.
- He calls this group our **“Inner Ring”** and we get good vibes from those folks when we trash an opposing group, which Jacobs calls the **“Repugnant Cultural Other.”**
- When we’re focused on the **Inner Ring**, however, it’s then that our speech becomes caustic.

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- The **truth** is, however, that we can all learn from others, even from **those with whom we disagree**.
- The **key** is found in choosing good conversation partners.
- There are plenty of **“trolls”** out there, particularly on social media, **who simply want to stir the pot**.
- But as the old adage says: **“Don’t wrestle with pigs. You only end up getting dirty while the pig enjoys it.”**



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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- Avoid those who fire off ideas like missiles and, instead, seek out the **best and fairest-minded** of people with whom you disagree.
- **Assume the best of people**. You may believe they are wrong, but that doesn’t mean you get to categorize them as **evil**.
- After all, remember, **we are often wrong, too** (v. 2).
- Building caricatures of others and their ideas is a poor use of our intellectual capital. **Value learning over debating**.
- Listen and learn in order to understand.

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THREE SIMPLE STEPS

- **FINALLY, BE HONEST!**

- When you do **speak**, state what you think and believe with **conviction** but draw from the well of God's wisdom and love.
- As James says,
 - “The **wisdom** from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy” (v. 17).
 - When we **speak** out of that wisdom, “a **harvest** of righteousness is sown in **peace** for those who make peace” (v. 18).

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SUMMARY

- This is helpful **wisdom** and **advice** in an age where good thinking and speaking are in short supply.
- **Words matter**, so let us think and speak clearly, whether it's with our mouths or our keyboards!
- *But the way of the **wicked** is like total darkness. They have no idea what they are stumbling over.* (Proverbs 4:19 NLT-SE)

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CONCLUSION

- The **path of the righteous** is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. (Proverbs 4:18 NIV)
- For, “**Whoever** would love life and see good days must keep his **tongue** from evil and his **lips** from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the **eyes of the Lord** are on the righteous and his **ears are attentive to their prayer**, but the **face of the Lord** is against those who do evil.” (1 Peter 3:10–12 NIV)

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