



# WATCH YOUR MOUTH



## PREVIEW

I suppose everyone here has said something they immediately wished they could take back. Or maybe you sent an email or a text message which you can't unsend. It may have felt cathartic to say it in the heat of the moment, but when the heat of the moment had passed, you realized it was not a very Christlike thing to say. Today's lesson will help us navigate through those feelings when we want to respond in a way that hurts instead of a way that would help bring healing. So we're going to talk about how to watch our mouth.

## PRAISE

Have you ever blurted something out in a moment of anger that you instantly wished you could take back? It happens to everyone at some point, which is probably why James felt compelled to give us some needful advice.


## PRESENT

Read James 1:19.

The moment we get angry, our brain reacts by firing up a little area in our brain called the "amygdala" (a mig'dala). The amygdala is part of the neural network that triggers the fight-or-flight syndrome. From there our body starts releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which shut down the more rational part of our brain (the prefrontal cortex), meaning when we are angry we can't think clearly. So it's no wonder our anger sometimes gets the best of us.

But there is hope! In recent years it was discovered the amygdala does more than just trigger the fight-or-flight response when reacting to unpleasant stimuli; it also triggers positive emotions when reacting to rewarding stimuli. The amygdala has little "outputs" aimed at the cerebral cortex that help to modulate our cognitive processes such as decision-making, attention, and memory. These outputs play an important role in affecting both positive and negative emotional reactions like joy or sadness, disgust or excitement, regret or satisfaction. In other words, as James indicated, it's not inevitable that we fly off the handle when provoked. Every person is capable of being swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. We can train ourselves to be peacemakers instead of troublemakers. We can learn to shut down anger before it erupts.

When you feel anger coming on, try asking questions instead of drawing conclusions. Don't assume you know someone's intentions, but listen to gain an understanding of their perspective. And if you feel the anger boiling over, take a second to pause and excuse yourself before you say something hurtful.



## PRACTICE

Ephesians 4:29 (GNT) says, "Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you." Anger can be dangerous when we react quickly, responding to our own hurt with words that wound others. Even if there's cause to be angry, we are called to build one another up, not tear one another down.

### **Read Ephesians 4:32.**

It's hard to be compassionate, tenderhearted, forgiving, and angry at the same time. So when you find yourself overcome with anger, ask God to give you compassion. Struggling to do that? Remember how gracious God has been to you.

Scripture reminds us that God doesn't treat us as we deserve, but He extends grace. His mercies are new every morning. He never runs out of patience with us. It's difficult to harbor anger against someone else when we remember how much forgiveness we have received through Christ.

## PRAY

Jesus, thank You for being slow to get angry with us. Thank You for your grace, love, and compassion, and help us to extend those same attributes to others today, even when we are angry or frustrated. You stepped in and touched our lives even when we were still sinning. You shed Your blood so that it would cover our anger and frustrations. Help us to learn to be slow to anger in the coming weeks. Help us to guard what we say, what we do, and where we go. Let us always speak like You and point people to You. Help us to be compassionate to everyone we meet this week. In Jesus' name, amen.

## PLUS

Anyone ever heard the song "Be Careful Little Eyes What You See"? (See Kid Song, Christian.net at [youtube.com/watch?v=BAoZZGJbJsQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=BAoZZGJbJsQ)) One verse of that song goes like this:

Oh be careful little tongue what you say,  
Oh be careful little tongue what you say,  
There's a Father up above looking down in tender love,  
So be careful little tongue what you say.

What are some ways we can be intentional this week about being slow to speak?