

Joyful Life Bible Studies

JAMES 3:1-12

Lesson 11

FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. Recall from last week's lesson what genuine faith produces. James 2:21-26
 - a. Three types of faith are professing faith, intellectual faith and saving faith. From James 2:(14-20)21-26 how can a person *know* that they have saving faith?
 - b. How have the examples of Abraham and Rahab increased your understanding of *faith without works is dead*?
2. James 3:1-12 begins with an exhortation. The rest of the passage uses analogies to describe the power and use of the tongue. Note and mark the paragraph divisions in James 3:1-12 as follows and summarize the key message of each:
 - a. James 3:1,2
 - b. James 3:3-5a
 - c. James 3:5b,6
 - d. James 3:7,8
 - e. James 3:9-12
3. *Death and life are in the power of the tongue* (Proverbs 18:21a). Two of the greatest illustrations ever written about the power of the *tongue* are contained in this third chapter of James. Our speech can wound or heal; build or destroy; encourage or depress; bless or wither. From this chapter we discover our words are as crucial to effective Christian living as our works. Genuine faith ought also to produce gracious speech. As you do your homework, ask the Lord to make you more aware than you have ever been of the way you speak. Express what you desire the Lord to do in your life through this lesson. Write your prayer below, using the following scripture as a guideline for your prayer. Memorize it if possible.

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer.*

-Psalm 19:14

SECOND DAY: Read James 3:1,2

1. The word *masters* in verse 1 refers to *teachers of the Word*. Teaching was a respected and highly looked upon profession in Jewish culture. Many Jews, upon their conversion to Christianity, were anxious to become teachers. James is warning them that there is a lot more to teaching than authority and recognition. What does the last half of this verse reveal about teachers?
 - a. This phrase *shall receive the greater condemnation* has been rendered *shall incur a stricter judgment*. In what way do you think teachers have a greater accountability?
 - b. Not only will teachers give a stricter account to the Lord, but they are responsible to those that they teach. Consider the expectations you have of the teachers you sit under. What is Paul's warning to teachers in Romans 2:21(22-24)?
 - c. What instructions does Peter give to those who oversee the flock in I Peter 5:2,3?
2. Why do you think an exhortation to those who would desire to teach is linked with verses regarding the *tongue*?
3. According to James 3:2, what do all of us, teachers and non-teachers alike, do?
 - a. The literal meaning of the word *offend* is *stumble*. *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 (NIV)*. Why can we control the rest of our *body* (behavior) if we are able to *bridle our tongue*?
 - b. The word *perfect* (mature) indicates a man that has reached his goal. In James' description of the *perfect man* he sets a goal - a challenge - for us to become more Christlike. It should be our goal to not offend or stumble anyone through our words. Although this seems like an impossibility, it should be our objective. What are some practical things you can do to meet that objective?

...I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue;

I will keep my mouth with a bridle. . . .

-Psalm 39:1

THIRD DAY: Read James 3:3-5a

1. James uses the word *behold* twice in this section. What are we to *behold* (scrutinize intensely)?
2. What two things does James use to compare the *tongue* to?
 - a. What is the purpose of the *bit*?
 - b. What is the purpose of the *rudder* (helm)?
 - c. State the significance of these two analogies.
3. James 3:5a is paraphrased in the Living Bible, *So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do.* According to the following scriptures what are some of the destructive things about the *tongue*:
 - a. Psalm 10:7
 - b. Proverbs 15:1
 - c. Proverbs 17:9
 - d. Proverbs 26:28
 - e. Add other scriptures that you have found.
 - (1.) What affect does this awareness of the destructive power of the *tongue* have on you?
4. Describe Isaiah's experience in Isaiah 6:1-5 and how it affected his knowledge concerning himself and his *tongue*.
 - a. Notice Isaiah's first reaction to the revelation of the holiness of the Lord. How does this speak to you about your *tongue*?

5. The *tongue*, although it is *a little member* (a small part of the body), has great power. Its power lies not only its ability to destroy, but also in its power to heal. From the following scriptures, what are some beneficial ways that we can use our *tongue*:
 - a. Proverbs 15:23
 - b. Isaiah 50:4
 - c. Ephesians 4:29
 - d. Add other scriptures that you have found to be beneficial.
6. Meditate on Luke 6:45 in relationship to James 3:3-5a. Why is it so important to be aware of this?
 - a. Write the instructions of Ecclesiastes 5:2 here.
 - (1.) How does the awareness of the tongue's relationship to the heart and the fact that God hears all of our words startle you into recognition of the absolute necessity to corral your careless speech?
7. Considering the importance of the condition of our heart, make the following scripture your prayer.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.*

-Psalm 51:10

FOURTH DAY: Read James 3:5b-8

1. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. James 3:5b NIV The damage of a fire is not limited to the trees and concluded when the fire is extinguished. Raging flames kill birds and animals. Ashes floating on streams kill fish. Human beings lose their lives fighting fires. Another cause of forest fires is arsonists. They deliberately start fires because of the pleasure it gives them. What kind of people does Proverbs 26:20-24 describe that could be arsonists by what they say? Use other versions for your answer, if you desire.
 - a. Choose Genesis 3:4,5; Genesis 39:7-20 or I Kings 21:7-10,13 and share the result of just one lie. (Read them all if you have time.)
2. How is the *tongue* described in James 3:6?

- a. Underline the key word used in both James 3:5b and 6.
3. According to verse 6, from where is the *tongue* ignited?
 - a. What does this say to you about the origin of gossip, angry words and filthy communication?
 - b. For a fire to be kindled, it must have kindling. What does this say about the condition of a heart from which destructive words come?
 - c. What happens when God's fire touches our *tongue*? Read Isaiah 6:6,7.
 - (1.) Remember, James 3:2 reminds us that we *all* stumble in many ways, especially in the use of our *tongue*. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (practice as a lifestyle) sin* (I John 3:9a). Therefore, if we are truly *born of God*, how will this be reflected in our talk?
 4. According to James 3:7, 8 what can *man* tame and what can he not tame?
 5. The Amplified Bible expands its definition of the *tongue* to be an *undisciplined, irreconcilable, restless evil, full of death-bringing poison*. Share an example of this kind of *unruly tongue*.
 - a. In what ways can the *tongue* poison friendships and relationships?
 - b. If you are married what is your speech to be like towards your husband? (Use scripture to support your answer.)
 - c. How can an *unruly tongue* affect our children?
 - (1.) What should you do when you realize you have said something harmful to your children?
 - d. Recognizing that the *tongue* is a *member* (a part) of the physical body, according to Romans 6:13 what is the antidote to a poisonous *tongue*?

*I will try to walk a blameless path, but how I need Your help,
especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should..*

-Psalm 101:2 TLB

FIFTH DAY: Read James 3:9-12

1. In this section James addresses the contradiction of *blessing God* and *cursing men* who are made in His likeness (*similitude*). James, by using the words *we* and *brethren* is clearly indicating that he is writing to Christians who are guilty of this. What does he state *ought not be* a part of the Christian's life? James 3:10
2. James 3:11,12 uses analogies from nature to emphasize the point that the Christian should not be speaking both good (*blessing*) and evil (*cursing*). It is a law of nature that like produces like. How do these examples follow this law:
 - a. *a fountain* (verse 11)
 - b. *a fig tree* (verse 12)
 - c. *a vine* (verse 12)
 - d. *a fountain* (verse 12)
3. *Blessing* is speaking well of someone. *Cursing* is speaking evil of someone. There are two streams inside each of us (the Spirit and the flesh), but there is only one opening, the mouth. Only one kind of water can come out of that opening, either sweet or bitter, either a *blessing* or a *curse*. What are some practical steps that we can take to be sure that sweet water comes forth from our *fountain*?
4. The Lord despises hypocrisy. How does Matthew 12:33 confirm this?

Challenge: How can we make the *tree good*? Use scripture to support your answer.

5. Briefly summarize the message of James 3:9-12.

Jesus, fill me with Your sweetness

Set my heart a-fire with You.

-P. Shore

SIXTH DAY: Review James 3:1-12

1. How has this study affected the use of your *tongue* this week?
 - a. What do you do to keep your *tongue* unspotted from the world?
 2. Pastor Chuck comments on James 3:2 this way, *If you can control your tongue, you can control your whole self.* Why is controlling of our *tongue* so crucial to our entire walk of faith?
 3. In what way did the analogies used in James 3:1-12 help you to understand the power of the *tongue*?
 - a. How did the analogies help you to discern the proper use of the *tongue*?
 4. Why is it so important to understand Luke 6:45 to have victory in the area of the *tongue*?
 5. Recall Ephesians 4:29. What difference would it make if this verse were used as a standard in all of your relationships?
 - a. What steps will you take to speak only that which edifies?
- (1.) Don't finish this lesson without taking the time to commit these steps to the Lord in prayer.

*The tongue, the heart's ambassador
How powerful it can be.
May my tongue, O Lord, be only used
To rightly represent Thee.*

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