

STUDYING THE BOOK OF JAMES
IN SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Lesson 5 - Taming the Tongue - James 3:1-12

Read the following verses in the New International Version or a translation of your choice. Then discuss the questions that follow. Questions should be studied by each individual before your discussion group meets.

Materials may be copied and used for Bible study purposes. Not to be sold.

JAS 3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. [2] 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.

JAS 3:3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. [4] 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. [5] 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. [6] 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.

JAS 3:7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, [8] but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Lesson 5 - Taming the Tongue - James 3:1-12

44. What unique responsibility does a teacher bear? (3:1)
45. If a person were never at fault in what he or she said, what would that show about the person? (3:2)
46. What is significant about the way we talk? (3:2)
47. What is the purpose of a bit in the mouth of a horse? (3:3)
48. What is the purpose of the rudder of a ship? (3:4)

49. What damage can a small spark cause to a great forest? (3:4)
50. What similarity does a person's tongue have to a horse's bit, a ship's rudder, and a spark of fire? (3:5)
51. How did James describe the tongue? (3:6-8)
52. What damage do our tongues do to us? (3:6)
53. What is so difficult about taming the tongue? (3:7-8)
54. Of what inconsistencies are we capable? (3:9-10)
55. What illustrations from nature did James use to condemn cursing? (3:11-12)
56. What can a spring or a fruit tree teach us about speech? (3:11-12)

Lesson 6 - Two Kinds of Wisdom - James 3:13-18

JAS 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. [14] But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. [15] Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. [16] For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

JAS 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. [18] Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Lesson 6 - Two Kinds of Wisdom - James 3:13-18

57. How can a person demonstrate wisdom and understanding? (3:13)
58. How can we tell when a person is wise? (3:13)
59. What common attitudes do we need to avoid boasting about? (3:14)
60. What is wrong with the "wisdom" of a selfish and bitter person? (3:14-15)
61. How is a person's character related to his or her ability to discern? (3:14-16)
62. From where does the "wisdom" of a selfish and bitter person come? (3:15)

63. To what do envy and selfish ambition lead? (3:16)
64. What are the qualities of the wisdom that comes from heaven? (3:17)
65. How does a wise person act? (3:17-18)
66. What happens when people "plant seeds of peace"? (3:18)