

Within the Word

A Study of James 3

A Note from Kathy

We all know how dangerous a small stick of dynamite or a vial of nitroglycerin can be. A wise person will treat each with the care and caution they deserve. Chapter 3 is a warning of the power that is in our words. Lord, open our eyes to the truth in this chapter. Helps us apply it to our own hearts, so that we can be a reflection of you everywhere we go and with every word we speak.

Observation

1. Read the chapter, at least twice, before beginning the study guide. This will give the Lord an opportunity to help you see the things He desires for you to know.
2. The position of teacher is a high calling. The responsibility of leading others in their spiritual life is of grave importance. What does James 3:1 warn those who would lead others?
3. The word “perfect” in verse 2 is the Greek word *Teleios*, which means brought to its end, finished, mature, wanting nothing for completeness. Please read this verse again. This is a worthy goal. Is it possible this side of eternity?
4. In verse 3, James uses three examples to help the reader understand. Fill in the result.

| Example | Result |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Horse's bit | |
| Ship's rudder | |
| First spark of a fire | |
| Tongue | |

5. Men and women are intelligent and creative. We are able to tame wild animals and train them to do what we want. What is the sad truth about our ability to control our own tongue?
6. In verses 9-10, James shares the sad truth about our tongue. We express praise with it and then speak harsh words to other people, who are created in His image. What does James say about this action?

7. James compares our hypocritical tendencies of the tongue to two impossibilities of nature (vs. 11-12). List them below.
 - a.
 - b.
8. Fill in the chart below with every fact you can find concerning both man's wisdom and God's wisdom (vs. 13-17).

| Man's Wisdom | God's Wisdom |
|--------------|--------------|
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9. Verse 18 draws on the undeniable fact of nature, that you reap what you sow. What do peacemakers sow? What is their harvest?

Application

1. James is speaking to Jewish believers. They valued highly the calling of a teacher. His warning is not meant to discourage someone from answering God's call to teach but serves as a warning of the gravity of this position. Who are you teaching? Did you realize that there is a greater responsibility because someone is following you?
2. Pardon my pun, but have you been "sparked" to view the words of your tongue in a different way? If so, what would you like to see changed, and how would you implement that change?
3. Did the impossibility of a stream producing both fresh and salt water, or a tree bearing both olives and figs, get your attention? Did you think it was absurd? Could you relate to the mouth that expresses both praise to God and harsh words to someone else? Now, that the Holy Spirit has brought this to your attention, the choice is yours to do something about it or continue in the sin. Why not stop right now and ask God to help you? Verse 2 reminds us that we all stumble in many ways, but if we seek His wisdom and His righteousness, we will not be disappointed.

4. Consider the list of wisdom from heaven in James 3:17. Find ways to apply this wisdom during your week. Be prepared to share your experiences and opportunities with your small group. If I plant a crop today, part of the joy is seeing it sprout. Look for the sprouts of your peacemaking.

Peace-loving

Considerate

Submissive

Full of mercy and good fruit

Impartial

Sincere