

# James

## Practical Principles for Life

### Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Four

**November 28, 2023**

Chapter 3

#### **James 3:1 – 2:**

*Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. <sup>2</sup>We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.*

**Romans 10:17:** *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

James warns them—and us—that teaching the Word of God should never be treated lightly. The person who teaches is under greater accountability to be true to God's Word because of the influence they have on those who listen.

Have you noticed that whatever God has gifted you to do is something you really love to do?

**Ephesians 2:10:** *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

So, what are the gifts God has given you that you truly love?

James makes this remarkable declaration:

Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, is able to keep their whole body in check.

How can a person control her tongue and keep her whole body in check?

**Matthew 12:34:** *You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

Words have incredible power.

**Proverbs 18:21:** The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

- What was the most helpful, positive or encouraging thing someone has said to you recently?
- What was the most harmful and discouraging thing someone has said to you?

#### **James 3:3 – 12:**

*When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

<sup>7</sup>All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup>but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

<sup>9</sup>With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have

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been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olive, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

James compares the tongue to six things:

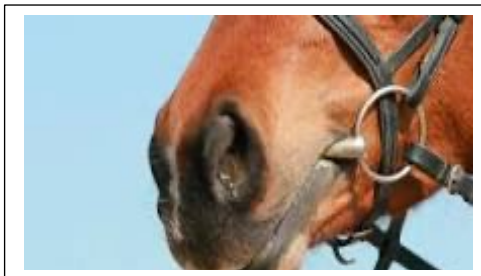
- 1- The bit
- 2- The rudder

- 3- Fire
- 4- A poisonous animal

- 5- A spring
- 6- A fig tree

### **The Bit and the Rudder:**

A small bit enables a rider to control a large horse.



A small rudder enables a captain to steer a great ship.

What happens when a bit and rudder are not controlled wisely and well? Great damage is possible. Ruin is possible. Lives could be lost.

So, when you can control this little thing called a tongue, you can control many other things as well.

- Controlling your tongue begins with controlling your thoughts.
- Controlling your tongue takes strong spiritual maturity. If you can do that, you can control your behavior, your attitudes, your actions.
- Controlling your tongue has positive effects on your relationships.
- Controlling your tongue means you avoid many unpleasant and regretful consequences.

Can you think of other ways that controlling your tongue makes a difference in your life?

**Proverbs 15:1:** *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

**Proverbs 10:19 (ESV):** *When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.*

**Psalms 141:3-4:** *Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.*

### **Fire and a Poisonous Animal**

Our words can start fires.

**Proverbs 26:20-21:** *Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.*

Fire *defiles*. Words can defile. The effect of words lingers on and on. You cannot unsay them.

Fire *burns and hurts*. Words can burn and hurt—like bullets out of a gun.

Fire *spreads*. A person's entire life can be injured or destroyed by the tongue.

Fire *destroys*. Words can break hearts and ruin reputations.

**Ephesians 4:29:** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

Speak only what is:

- Wholesome
- Helpful
- Beneficial to others

Animals and fires can be tamed.

- When you tame an animal, you get a worker instead of a destroyer.
- When you control fire, you generate power and warmth.

But James says that "no man can tame the tongue." Does that mean we're doomed to our destructive tongues?

### **The Spring of Water and the Fig Tree**

Fresh water refreshes. Our words can be refreshing. But salt water does not refresh - it does not quench your thirst but makes it worse. They look alike - fresh water and salt water. But the results are very different.

How can it be, James asks, that out of the same mouth comes cursing and blessing?

List some words we should say frequently each day.

### **James 3:13 – 18**

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.<sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.<sup>15</sup> Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.<sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.*

What is the difference in wisdom and knowledge?

### **Two Kinds of Wisdom:**

False wisdom is earthly - sensual. It is a wisdom that gets its origin in man's nature totally apart from the Spirit of God.

### **Characteristics of False Wisdom:**

- Proud and arrogant
- Self-promoting
- Selfish ambition - wanting to get ahead for your own benefit.
- Boasting - How do you report God's blessings in your life? Nothing is prouder than the wisdom of men.
- Denying the truth - Lying - Satan is the father of lies.

True wisdom - comes from above.

**Characteristics of True Wisdom:**

- pure
- peace-loving
- considerate
- submissive
- full of mercy and good fruit
- impartial and sincere

How do we get this wisdom from above?

**James 1:5:** *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

**Ephesians 1:17:** *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

**2 Timothy 3:15:** *And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

How do you know if the wisdom you have is from God or not? How do you make right decisions? Test your decisions by James 3:17.

1. Is it pure? God's wisdom is always pure. That means the decision would not lead you into any kind of impurity in your lifestyle or any unnecessary temptations.
2. Is it peace-loving? God's wisdom will lead us into a peaceable state of mind.
3. Is it considerate? Would these decisions be inconsiderate of someone else?
4. Is it submissive? Is there something you've subconsciously been saying "Hand's off, Lord."
5. Is it full of mercy and good fruit? Will this decision be a hindrance to your pursuit of these important eternal things?
6. Is it impartial and sincere? These relate to our motives.

If you take yourself through James' checkpoints, you'll have done some pretty deep and serious thinking—and praying. This will in most cases give you the assurance of what the mind of Christ is concerning the decision you face.

God did not leave us down here to grope around in the dark, taking our best guesses at the decisions facing us, hoping they'll turn out okay. He left us with all we need to make good decisions.

## Decision Making Checklist

**James 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.*

1. What impact would this decision have on my spiritual life? Would it tend to bring me down spiritually, causing impurity in my life? Would it subject me to circumstances that could lead to a deterioration of my spiritual growth?

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2. Do I have peace about this decision, or am I troubled in my spirit? Would this decision tend to bring unrest or lack of peace into my life or relationships?

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3. Is there something about this decision that would be inconsiderate of others in some way, or would it allow me to be more considerate of others?

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4. Is there some area in my life where I haven't allowed God's Spirit to control me? Is there something I've been saying "Hand's off, Lord," some area of disobedience?

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5. Is this decision full of mercy and good fruit? Will it lead me to develop these good things in my life, or will it interfere with the development of these qualities or cause them to deteriorate?

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6. What are my motives in making this decision? Are they impartial and sincere? Are they worthy of the Holy Spirit within me?

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