**James, a Bible Study - Chapter 3**

1. Read James 3
2. If you had to write a subtitle for this chapter what would it be?
3. **V1-2: Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.**
   1. Why does James up the ante on teachers?
   2. Cite some examples in the NT where false teaching undermined the Gospel of Christ
   3. Why do you suppose James juxtaposed this opening passage on teaching with the larger lesson on the need to tame the tongue?
   4. Why might a teacher easily succumb to spiritual and intellectual pride in Jesus’ time?
4. **V2-12: 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. 3When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4Or 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. 5Likewise, 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. 6The 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. 7All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.**
   1. James uses a variety of word pictures in this text to illustrate the power of the tongue. What do a bridle, a ship’s rudder, and a fire suggest about the tongue?
   2. In **V8** James says no one can tame the tongue. What larger point is James trying to make?
   3. How can we more easily discern the difference between genuine concern for someone and gossip?
   4. Look at Proverbs 18:21. In view of this passage, how can we cultivate a healthy fear of the power of our words?
   5. In **V3:2** James uses the word “perfect.” We have seen the same word in James **V1:4**. In both instances it means “mature.” In what ways are you more mature in speech than you were a year or two ago?
   6. In what circumstances do you routinely stumble and quickly use words that you would ordinarily avoid? What steps are you taking/do you need to take to help overcome this temptation?
   7. What painful irony does James articulate in **V9?**
   8. How might we learn, over time, to develop the habit of using words to praise God rather than curse men?
5. **V13-18: 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. 14But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17But 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. 18Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.**
   1. **V13** is sneaky. Not only does it cite the importance of wisdom, but it reminds us of a necessary outcome of wisdom—deeds done in humility. What do you think James means when he talks about deeds done in humility?
   2. **V14-17** juxtapose two different kinds of wisdom. From reading this passage what are some of the characteristics of earthly wisdom?
   3. What is the not surprising outcome of earthly wisdom?
   4. Look at **V17-18**. How is this kind of wisdom so dramatically different than earthly wisdom? What are its outcomes?
   5. James uses eight words in **V17** to describe this kind of wisdom. How do these words contrast with the words used to describe earthly wisdom in **V15-16**?
   6. In V18 James is reminding us that peacemakers (those who seek and practice heavenly wisdom) reap a harvest of righteousness. From your perspective, what does a harvest of righteousness look like? We know this kind of righteousness has heavenly dimensions. Does it have any earthly dimensions as well?