

James

Lesson #11, Chapter 3:1-12

As you come to your lesson today, be sure to ask the Lord for insight and help as you study this life changing section of Scripture.

1. Explain the ribbon of thought that connects Chapter 3 verse 1 with James' previous comments at the end of Chapter 2.
2. What command is given in 3:1? What reason is given for that command?
3. Why do you think the church needed to be admonished to "not let *many* of them become teachers" based on what you've learned about the church in Chapters 1 and 2?
4. What does James mean when he says that teachers will be judged more strictly? See 1 Corinthians 9:17; 1 Timothy 1:11-12; 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:17.

"James's point is that no believer should begin any form of teaching God's Word without a deep sense of the seriousness of this responsibility. To sin with the tongue when alone or with one or two other persons is bad enough; but to sin with the tongue in public, especially while acting as a speaker for God, is immeasurably worse. Speaking for God carries with it great implications, both for good and ill." John MacArthur

"There is no special honor in preaching. There is only special pain. The pulpit calls those anointed to it as the sea calls its sailors; and like the sea, it batters and bruises and does

¹John F. MacArthur Jr., [James](#), *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 148.

not rest. ... To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time and to know each time you do it that you must do it again.” Unknown

5. How does verse 2 explain the reasoning behind the command of verse 1?

6. See if you can come up with at least 5 observations about verse 2.

7. Define *perfect* [Strong’s #5046] as James uses it here in verse 2. Notice how James uses the same word in 1:4, 17, 25. Paul speaks similarly in 1 Corinthians 9:27. Explain how the two passages are similar.

8. What term(s) would you use to describe the mature believer in verse 2?

9. In verse 2 we learn that a believer who is controlled in their speech will *generally* exercise self-control in other areas of their life. Why is that? See also 2 Corinthians 4:14-15; Philippians 1:21; 3:7-11; Titus 2:11-14. What is it about those motivations that guides and directs how we live?

10. From verses 3-7 list James’ examples of small things that control larger things.

²Unknown author quoted by John F. MacArthur Jr., [James](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 150.

11. What is James' point in giving all those illustrations in verses 3-7? What does James want to make sure we *get*?

12. What specific things do we learn about the tongue in verses 5-6?

13. What dire warnings in verses 5-6 do we need to take to heart as we consider our own speech?

14. According to verses 7-8, what kinds of things are tamed? And yet, what one thing remains untamed?

15. What further information do we learn about our tongues from verses 8-10?

16. It's at this point that we need to look again at verse 2, which contains a "wonder" to consider, as well as an "encouragement." List the "wonder" and "encouragement" you see in verse 2, in light of all we've just observed about our speech.

17. James concludes verse 10 by saying, "My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." Here is hope! That simple statement indicates there's a way out, that we are *not bound* to destructive speech. He lays the groundwork for that hope by asking two rhetorical questions. Please explain what James wants us to understand from his questions in verses 11-12.

18. Summarize what you learn from the following verses as it relates to what we're discovering here. See Romans 8:1, 5-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 1:9.

19. What truths about the Christian life underscore James' comments at the end of verse 10 and in verses 11-12?

20. Read verses 9 and 10 again. Here we find ample room for *application* as we consider *our own speech*. What issues are brought up in these verses? When do we find ourselves most susceptible to engaging in these speech sins?

21. It goes without saying that we're *all* guilty of the sins of the tongue. The key then is not to high-five each other in recognition of that fact, but rather, to consider *how we can honor* the Lord *and* our brothers and sisters in Christ. What can we learn and apply from the following Scriptures to aid us in giving God glory in our speech? See Psalm 19:12-14; 139:23-24; Colossians 3:1-3, 5, 8-10, 12-17; 1 Peter 1:14-16, 22-23.

22. If you find you are continually losing the battle in taming your tongue what does verse 12 indicate you need to consider about your spiritual condition? See also 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:2-11. Why is this spiritual self-assessment so important and something *every one* of us should undertake?

My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. James 3:10

“The implied application to the tongue is the point that it will produce according to its *nature* and not otherwise, and that it can have only *one* nature and not two or more. If it then blesses and curses out of the same mouth, something is wrong. It cannot be possible

that its cursing is untrue; thus it follows that its blessing must be untrue, be nothing but formality and hypocrisy. It is, indeed, water out of the cleft, but brackish, undrinkable water to God. Even a tree and a vine yield only the one kind of fruit.”³ R. C. H. Lenski

“Back to the principle at hand, those who truly praise God do not curse their brothers. James did not refer to a thoroughly new constitution of the person but to true faith that does what is natural to it, both toward God and toward other human beings. Such faith praises and blesses.”⁴ Kurt Richardson

“To a large extent, we are known by the way we talk. Over the long haul, what we say gives others a pretty good idea of who and what we really are. That principle applies to good things as well as sinful, but James’s emphasis here is entirely on the negative aspects of our speaking—such as gossip, slander, false accusations, lying, filthy language and stories, and other sins of the tongue—that can destroy individual lives, families, schools, churches, and communities.”⁵ John MacArthur

For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says,
he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.
James 3:2

³R. C. H. Lenski, [*The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*](#) (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), 613.

⁴Kurt A. Richardson, [*James*](#), vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 160.

⁵John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 156.