

**THE EPISTLE OF JAMES**  
**Study Guide**  
Lesson Five – James 3:1-12

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James 2:26 says, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” We saw last week that faith and works are inseparable. When you have faith in God’s faithfulness, then you will faithfully take steps in faith!

How can we have faith in God’s faithfulness even in the nitty-gritty daily grind of life? Let me give a typical example from marriage counseling. Let’s say that a family is preparing for a camping trip with another family that they are meeting at a certain time up in the mountains where there is no cell phone coverage. It is the day they are leaving and they are in the hustle and bustle of gathering the food, the pots, pans and utensils, the tent, the sleeping bags, the blankets, the clothing, the sunscreen, the bug spray, the rain gear, the hiking boots, the fishing gear, etc., etc. In the chaos of lost items, overly excited kids, and a ticking clock reminding them that they are late, the tension starts to rise. One spouse makes a rather tense and pointed “suggestion” to the other spouse, who in turn becomes defensive and sharp tongued. The spouse who made the suggestion becomes hurt and then angry. An argument breaks out which, of course, takes up more time. They realize they are going to be REALLY late meeting the other family and have no way of contacting them. Accusations start to fly, yelling pursues, and the kids are crying.

Where is faith in God’s faithfulness? Where is God in their thought life? As imperfect as the situation may be, is God still in control? Does God care more about the lost bug spray or about love and humility (and perhaps a sense of humor)? Do they trust in God’s timing? Maybe He delayed their trip for a reason. Do they humbly trust that God may be using this trial to teach them something or are they just trying to defend themselves? Do they stop to pray together for the family they are supposed to meet? The camping trip has become more important than trusting God and loving others. In the ugliness of the moment, anger, confusion, and hurt rule their hearts. Harsh words are spoken that tear at the fiber of their family. Hearts are broken and God is not glorified. Christ, however, died for the brokenhearted.

**The Power of the Word**

- 1) Look up the following verses: Genesis 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:14, 1:20, 1:24, 1:26, and Psalm 33:6.  
How powerful is God’s Word?
  
- 2) Read John 1:1-2 and 14. Who is the Word described as?

- 3) Genesis 1:26 tells us that man is made in God’s image. While our words don’t have the power to create, they are powerful. Read Proverbs 18:21 and then Proverbs 10:19-21. Thinking about the story of the camping trip, summarize the lesson from these Proverbs?
  
  
- 4) We have seen through James that faith naturally produces works (which includes the words we speak). Read Romans 10:8-10 and Matthew 10:32-33. When the word of God is in our hearts, leading to salvation, what is the natural work that results from our belief?

**James 3:1-12**

- 5) Read James 2:26 - 3:1-2. As you bring the lesson of faith and works forward from last week and tie it to this week’s lesson, in what ways do you think teachers are judged more strictly (in context, this judgment is by men, not God)?
  - a) Read Matthew 23:1-7. List the deeds (works) of the Pharisees that Jesus judged.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b) Read 1 Timothy 1:5-7. What should the goal of teaching be? From verse 7, what is the trap that many teachers fall into?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c) Go back to James 3:2. Is there any teacher who does not stumble in what he or she says?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - d) Look again at Matthew 23. From verses 8-12, regardless of what a person may be called, ultimately, who are we to listen to?
    - i) From verse 11, how can we tell if someone is a great leader?

- 6) Read James 3:2-8. James uses a lot of imagery to describe the tongue. The chart below lists the imagery mentioned in these verses. List why the image is used to describe the tongue.

IMAGERY	DESCRIPTION OF TONGUE
A Horse's Bit	
A Ship's Rudder	
A Small Fire	
An Untamed Animal	

- a) These verses in James tell us that the tongue affects the whole body. In Matthew 15:11 Jesus said, "It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man." Read Matthew 15:15-20 (or read verses 1-20 for the full story). Where do our words come from?

Note: Our words reveal our attitude or our heart. What we speak is often the first indication of a stinky attitude. If our attitude doesn't change, more and more actions will follow. The only way to wash our mouth is to wash our attitude by seeking the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ!

- b) Read Colossians 3:8-14. Make a list of things we are to put aside (some translations say put off or lay aside or get rid of) and the things we are to put on. Take special note of verse 14. What is the most important thing to put on?

PUT ON	PUT OFF

- c) James 3:6 compares our tongue to a small flame that can cause a huge forest fire. He also says that it is set on fire by hell. Look up Ephesians 6:12-13. When we are having tension with someone, who are we really struggling against?
  
- d) Name a time that you said something that caused a situation to get out of control. How could you have handled it in a more loving way? Share with the group if you want to.

Note: James 3:7 and verse 9 seem to be referring to Genesis 1:26, *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”* God gave us dominion over the animals and the earth but the tongue is such a hard little thing to control! We are made in His image and our words are powerful. We can use our words to lead someone to Christ, or we can be verbally abusive, tearing someone to shreds. We can bless God, or we can curse men. When we curse others, remember that we are cursing a precious being who is made in God’s image.

- 7) Read James 3:9-12. Again, James uses beautiful imagery to describe that our words reflect what is in our heart. The only way to control our mouth is by being controlled by God’s love. Look up Romans 6:12-19. Our tongue is a member (or part of) our body. From verse 13 what are we to do with our members?

- a) How does God’s grace motivate us to be slaves of righteousness?

Note: Love is the wheels that grace rides on!

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