

James 3:1-12 ~ An Unruly Tongue ~ Discussion Questions

1. In Verse 3:1, who was James warning about becoming a teacher? And why?
2. Does (or should) James' admonishment about judging teachers more strictly still apply today? (Luke 12:48)
3. Would (or should) a similar warning apply to becoming a substance abuse counselor or a mentor?
4. In Verse 3:2, James says, "if anyone makes no mistakes in what he says, he is a perfect man." Is anyone a perfect man? If not, what is James saying here?
5. Why is James emphasizing being perfect in Verse 3:2 and also back in Verse 1:4 ("be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing")?
6. How can we move closer to perfection? (Psalm 140:1-3, Psalm 55:17, Colossians 4:2)
7. In Verse 3:2, is James talking about what we do say or what we don't say?
8. James gives four examples of a small thing controlling or overpowering a large one. What are they?
9. Why does he emphasize the negative example of the fire so much more than the positive examples of the horse's bit or ship's rudder? (Matthew 15:11, 18-19)
10. What are some examples of an untamed tongue (for example, gossip)? Try to name at least six. (Proverbs 12:18-19, 13:3, 16:27, 17:7, 18:8, 25:18, Matthew 7:15)
11. There's an old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Is it true?
12. If no human being can control the tongue (Verse 8), why bother trying?
13. Have you ever said contradictory things as in Verses 9-10? Which speech pattern represents your true identity?
14. How is the power of words used by the Holy Spirit within a person of faith? (James 1:19-20).

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1. Do your words more often help than hurt? Do they reveal your true self, or do they conceal you from others?
2. When you're with non-believers, do you ever talk about God? A) No, B) Only if someone else brings it up or asks a question, C) I look for opportunities to speak about my faith, say if someone mentions an illness or a natural disaster or just that it's a beautiful day.
3. How do you react when you hear someone cursing or using abusive language?
4. A very common expression on reality TV shows and in our daily lives is, "Oh, my God!" How do you feel about that?
5. How can a person be hurt by the words of others?
6. Why are sins of speech often overlooked as not serious?
7. How is our speech influenced by others around us? Do you think of yourself as mostly A) being influenced by the speech of others or B) influencing how others speak?
8. What practical advice would you give someone who wanted to control his tongue better? Does this advice apply to you too?
9. In what times or places can your tongue be used for good?
10. What positive words do your friends and acquaintances need to hear from you this week? How can you remember to say these things?
11. A 15-year-old street kid approaches you one day and says he noticed that you're carrying a Bible and asks you, "What do I say to God?" You have less than 10 minutes before you have to be at work. You know you'll probably never see the kid again. How do you answer him?