

Gleanings of Grace

James 3

Lesson 20

The book of James echoes the words of Solomon in Proverbs and of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount. His writings lend to practical Christianity, encouraging God's people to act like God's people. James uses truths to put into perspective thinking that can draw us away from the LORD and promises us that if we *draw near to the Lord, He will draw near to us* (James 4:8).

OBSERVATION: Read James 3

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns that refer to *God* and the *tongue*.

Key Words: *God*, *tongue/mouth*, and *wise/wisdom*
3. The contrasting word *but* is used four times in James 3. Mark the word. List the phrases following the word *but* in verses 8, 14, and 17.

Background:

1. The book of James is filled with many familiar verses. Scan through the chapters and list two verses from each (excluding chapter 3) and share what the verse says to you.

Chapter One:**Chapter Two:****Chapter Four:****Chapter Five:**

Read James 3:1-5 - Bits and Rudders

1. James, in his practical way, has explained to us that our faith should result in actions. In chapter 1, he encourages the believer to be patient in trials. In chapter 2 he encourages the believer to practice what is truth. In this section, he focuses on the exhortation to have power over our tongues. It would appear that some of the recipients of this letter desired to be *teachers*. What did James warn them in verse 1?
 - a. What do you see might be:
the advantages of being a teacher

the disadvantages of being a teacher
 - b. Consider the words to those who claim to represent the Lord in Romans 2:21-24. How might these words apply to a *teacher*?
 - c. Notice the last phrase of James 3:1. Why do you think those who *teach* will *receive a stricter judgment*?
2. James 3:2-5 use different ways to describe the power of the *tongue*. Verse 2 disqualifies each of us from claiming *perfection*. Why?
 - a. In what ways does *not stumbling in word (bridling the tongue)*, enable a person to *bridle* the rest of their *body*?
 - 1.) How is verse 3 an example of this?
3. What analogy does James 3:4 use to describe the tongue?
 - a. What obstacles does the captain of a ship face in steering the ship?
 - 1.) How might this relate to the *tongue*?
4. *Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!* (James 3:5). What are some of the detrimental things the *tongue* can do?

5. What do the following proverbs reveal about the *tongue*?

Proverbs 10:19

Proverbs 12:22

Proverbs 15:1

- a. Explain what is more difficult for you – to stop using your tongue for the negative or to intentionally use it for good?
- b. Why do you think it is so difficult to direct the *tongue* to be used for good or not to be used for bad?

Read James 3:6-12 – Blessings and Cursings

1. Using James 3:6, list what is mentioned about the *tongue*?
 - a. Choose one of those statements and comment on it.
2. Ponder the example of *taming* creatures of the sea, air, and land. Why do you think they are less difficult to *tame* than the *tongue*?
3. Consider the words of James 3:8. In what ways can the *tongue* be *full of deadly poison*?
 - a. Often, the effects of *poison* cannot be reversed. How does this relate to the *tongue*?
4. James 3:9-12 draws our attention to the dual use of the *tongue*. List some of the comparisons made.

- a. Notice the phrase in verse 10. *These things ought not to be so.* As Christians, how can we take better control of our *tongues*?

Read James 3:13-18 – Wisdom From Above

1. James switches his focus from the power of the tongue to the attitude behind its use. He addresses how true *wisdom* behaves. According to verse 13, how *are our works to be done*?

- a. Write the words of Jesus from Matthew 11:29.

- 1.) Describe the *meekness* of Jesus.
2. According to James 3:14,16, what can be evidence that we are not behaving in *meekness*?
3. List and define the three sources of *wisdom that does not descend from above.* verse 15
4. List and define the evidences of *wisdom from above.*
5. What might be our goal or motive evidenced by:
wisdom not from above

wisdom from above

- a. What are some things you can do when you realize your motives are not as they should be?
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6. Consider the words of James 3:18. One goal of *wisdom from above* is *peace*. When *peace* is planted, *righteousness* will spring forth. Read Paul's prayer for the Philippians in Philippians 1:9-11. What did he desire for them?
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- a. What are some results that can come from our seeking *peace* with others?

REVIEW: Read James 3

1. What are your thoughts when you consider the accountability of those who teach?

2. What can our *tongue* expose about us?

3. What have you gleaned from your study about *wisdom*?

*Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.*
- Hosea 10:12

Observation Worksheet

James 3:1-18

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. ² For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. ³ Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. ⁴ Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. ⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. ¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.