

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

April 25, 2021

Day 1: James 3:1

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

This does not sound like encouragement for going into the teaching profession. In the ancient world a teacher was assumed to have good knowledge of the subject and the ability to transmit that knowledge. In the Church because there was no New Testament the teachers had to transmit information just as they received it. The teacher was in a position to change the gospel or modify it. There was more flexibility in preaching than teaching. In the early Church the Bishops were teachers. The next generation of writers (those after the disciples) were Bishops of the Church.

Question: What did you think of teachers when you were young?

Challenge: What have you thought the difference between preaching and teaching is?

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-26

Day 2: James 3:2

We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

James is being ironic. Nobody would ever admit to always being right. If anybody would try to assert that they were always correct then the end of the verse comes in to say "able to keep his whole body in check." Our minds are strong but we cannot completely control our bodies.

Question: What is the last "fault" you have committed?

Challenge: What area of life do you feel most in control of?

Scripture: Romans 1:16-18

Day 3: James 3:3-5

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or 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. Likewise 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.

It is important to know both what we believe and to be able to state why we believe. It is even more important to be able to merge our beliefs with our actions. James knows that our tendency to listen little and speak much will get us into trouble. The tongue is used as a metaphor for speaking without thinking.

Question: Can we do more harm with our mouths or our hands?

Challenge: Think of a small change you can make in life that might bear good results.

Scripture: Romans 14:1-23

Day 4: James 3:6-8

The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

James believes that after a person has practiced their religion they learn to control their tongue. I believe that today the tongue is the hardest thing to control. Practice means on a daily basis. I heard a guy say that he was doing something to help firm his stomach muscles, sit-ups. I asked how many. He said one - half in the morning and half in the evening. His muscles will never become firm at that rate. If we practice our Christianity only "once in a while," we will not have firm faith muscles.

Question: Do you think that James is exaggerating in this verse about the tongue?

Challenge: Think of some experiences where someone speaking to you has been good and not bad.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:14-22

Day 5: James 3:9-10

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Speech makes real what one is thinking. As long as our thoughts are in our heads they are not fully known. When we speak not only do others hear but we hear ourselves what we think. James is asserting that we have the power to bless and curse. We can bless individuals and thereby help them feel God's presence or we can curse individuals and help them feel Satan's presence. The forces of evil love us when we curse others.

Question: Do you think we have the power to curse someone?

Challenge: Decide on someone that you want to bless and do so in some way this week.

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:9-18

Day 6: James 3:11

Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Before we speak we need to have our attitude in good shape. If my attitude is not good then I hope my ability to resist speaking is in good shape. We cannot always stop ourselves from thinking badly, but we may be able to restrain ourselves from speaking curses to someone.

Question: Do you find yourself getting angry over little things?

Challenge: If your head knows James is correct then how do you get the information to your heart?

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:17-25