

A false idea can spread quickly through a group of people. It is particularly damaging when it is in direct opposition to a Godly truth, as in a misrepresentation of Scripture. A falsehood regarding an individual member of the body of Christ can affect their reputation and the effectiveness of their service and witness.

- 4. There was a place SW of Jerusalem named *Gehenna*, that was used as the city garbage disposal area. It was known for constantly burning fires, and was used as place to symbolize the eternal place of torment and punishment or hell. How do sins of the tongue spread spiritual pollution? What characteristics of speech in your life (your own or others close to you) do you feel need to be sanitized or removed?**

Some examples are: destructive speech, angry words, belittling, false teaching; negative words can be lasting and cause damage to the whole person.

Pray specifically for your speech to be more effective for positive purposes in your life and in the lives of others, always reflecting the love and grace of God.

DAY 2: Read James 3:7-12

- 1. Verses 7 & 9 refer to the creation of animals and human and present an interesting contrast between humans who can tame many animals but who are not able to tame their own tongues. Why are humans able to tame animals over whom God gave us dominion (Genesis 1:28), but unable to tame our own tongues?**

We all have very strong opinions and emotions. As hard as we try to control our speech, our immediate thoughts come out more quickly through our speech and are not delivered as positively as they would be if we exercised some careful thought and Christ-like editing before speaking. John MacArthur (*James: Guidelines for a Happy Christian Life*, p. 52) wrote: "No wonder God put the tongue in a cage, behind the teeth, walled in by the mouth!" And yet errant words still escape.

- 2. Verse 10 describes the dual nature of our tongues; what does this mean to you? How do Proverbs 13:3, and Romans 3:13-14 help us to understand what James writes?**

Our speech can both verbally defile God's teaching, and praise Him. The nature of our responses is a measure of our heart, our faithfulness to God's teaching. Proverbs 13:3 says that one who guards his speech will thrive, but the one who speaks rashly will come to ruin. The bitter, negative speech that is deceiving is highlighted in Romans 3:13-14. Each nature of the tongue has consequences for the one who is speaking and the ones spoken to.

- 3. How do the examples in nature that are described in James 3: 11-12 help us to understand the two natures of the tongue?**

As there are a lot of consistencies in nature, our human heart and strong emotions produce inconsistencies. We cannot be both Godly and of the world, in our lifestyle and speech and be pure in God's eyes. The expression "speaking out of both sides of one's mouth" is indicative of one who is living on the fence of his faithfulness. God tells us we cannot serve Him and the world.

- 4. If no one can conquer the destructiveness of our speech, is it a hopeless task? No; only God, by His power within us, can tame the humanly untamable tongue. Find some great hope in Acts 2:25-28, and reflect on the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23.**

To Dig Deeper: Read Psalm 39 about David's struggle with his oft wayward tongue for more encouragement.

First David tries on his own not to "sin with my tongue." Note all the words "I" in verses.1-3. That did not go so well, so he invokes God's help, as he acknowledges his life's design and destiny by God in the verses that follow. He finally gives it over to God for realizing he can't do it all, but only with God's help.

DAY 3: Read James 3:13-16 and 2 Chronicles 1:1-10

The next section of James 3 focuses on wisdom. Reflect today on the importance of wisdom from the Old Testament.

1. **With all the wealth and power that Solomon had, what one request did he ask from God? Why do you think he chose wisdom as his greatest desire?**

Solomon asked for wisdom. He sincerely wanted to rule God's people as He would want him to. He knew he could not do it on his own.

2. **In what areas of your life could you use more wisdom? Remember the promise of James 1:5.**
3. **Read these golden nugget verses in Proverbs regarding Wisdom: 1:7, 2:6, 4:5, 17:27-28, 19:20-22, and 25:11. What do these verses say about the nature and importance of wisdom?**

DAY 4: Read James 3: 13-16

1. **There are two types of wisdom mentioned in this passage. What are they?** Human wisdom and God-given Wisdom. **How can you tell the difference?** The kind of wisdom one has will be revealed in the kind of life that is lived. Human wisdom is the result of self-centered ambition as reflected in unspiritual words and actions. Any gain obtained is self-serving. God-given wisdom is centered on a desire to do whatever is pure and just, according to God's plan. Others needs are attended to before one's own.

2. **Verses 13 and 14 point to a struggle between humility and ambition. How would you describe this struggle in your own words? How can you attain the goals in your life and find a healthy balance between ambition and humility?**

Ambitions and positive life goals are good to have, and you can feel good about accomplishments that you have achieved. Praise from others is a great affirmation; you may know how you have helped others by what you have done. In humility, you need to give credit to God for giving you the wisdom and strength to achieve those goals and to be sure that they align with God's purposes for your life.

3. **Where does ungodly wisdom (wisdom that does not come from heaven) originate?** If a person is not seeking God's will for their life through His teaching, they will be open to the devil's deceit that they are wise enough on their own.
4. **Also read Jesus' admonition in Matthew 7:15-23. Have you experienced such ungodly wisdom? How did you discover the truth about these people?**

DAY 5: Read James 3: 17-18

1. **How do these verses describe wisdom?** Pure and peace-loving, producing good and righteous results. **How does this description of wisdom compare with Paul's description of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5?** The kind of wisdom we reflect in our lives will determine how effective our personal lives are and the effectiveness of our Christian witness to others.
2. **How can God-focused wisdom help people relate better to others in their various communities—church, neighborhood, society?**

Focus on peace-loving, right relationships. Be considerate and make reasonable allowances for others' differences. Have the willingness to listen to others' views and life issues. Be open to the possibility of learning from them. Show mercy to others, helping them in positive practical and spiritual efforts.

3. **What help is God's wisdom in resolving conflict? Proverbs 15:18 will give some additional insight.**
Peace flows from Godly wisdom to calm earthly quarrels. Conflict is met with a calm approach, reasoned thinking and edifying speech in humility, acknowledging others differing views while extending understanding even if you still disagree. You do not need to abandon your Christian principles, but showing genuine caring for individuals with differing viewpoints, and showing kindness and consideration will be more conducive to them listening and possibly considering what you have to share with them.

4. **What does James mean in verse 18 when he writes about the relationship between peacemaking and righteousness? Have you seen examples of this in your life? What can we do to be more faithful peacemakers?**
Peacemakers who sow in peace, work at Godly peacemaking, and nurture loving peaceful relationships will reap a harvest of God's blessing. This will result in their own inner peace and they will see conflicts with others resolved more effectively.

DAY 6: Reread James 3

1. **Memorize Verse 18. Put it in a place you see regularly. Pray for God's wisdom, power and grace to enable you to be an effective peacemaker.**

2. **What does this passage tell us about what it means to be a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ? Write down two or three characteristics of disciples that come from James 3.**

3. **Reflect on the words of the hymn "God of Grace and God of Glory".** This hymn was written by Harry Emerson Fosdick (1898-1969) in 1930, at a time of conflict about biblical interpretation and social justice issues within the Protestant church and society. He was a Baptist, who became a Presbyterian minister with a heart for resolving conflicts and social injustices.

*God of Grace and God of Glory,
On Your people pour Your power.
Crown your ancient church's story,
Bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
For the facing of this hour.*

*Cure thy children's warring madness,
Bend our pride to thy control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
Rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
Lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.*

Or consider this hymn that shows us how to use our tongues wisely:

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace.*