**WHO IS WISE?**

James 3:1-18

Key Verse 13

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”

**Introduction**



 This chapter shows that the genuineness of a person’s faith will be demonstrated by his or her speech. So what one says could be a test of living faith, for in fact the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from their heart. Matthews 15:18-20a reads, “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them.For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person.” Also James stressed that we need heavenly wisdom to live good lives and to utter good words. May the Lord help us to get wise to know how to say and what to say with today’s instructions.

1. Read verses 1-6. Why should we, as Bible teachers, be very careful in what we say? (1, 2) How are the illustrations of a bit, a rudder, and a fire, fitting in describing the tongue? (3-6) How can our words influence others?

1-1, Read verses 1-6.

 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. **2** We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

**3** When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.**4** 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. **5** 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. **6** The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

1-2, Why should we, as Bible teachers, be very careful in what we say? (1, 2)

 ***Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.***

* James begins this chapter by talking about the influence of teachers. What he is saying here is that we shouldn’t rush to be a teacher.
* Sometimes people will want to become a Bible teacher because they like to get all the attention and praise that comes from others.
* But James wants his readers to know what they are getting into. Teachers are held to a higher standard for what they say and do because of their influence.
* No one is perfect and sometimes we say things that we should never have said and we wish that we can take them back but we can’t.
* Teachers can have good influence as well as bad, however unfortunately people want to remember the bad.
* Being a bad influence has consequences. Therefore we must be careful especially if we have been entrusted with a position of teacher.

***2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.***

* When he says that we all stumble - what James means is that we sin. We sin in many ways, but here James is focusing specifically with our tongue.
* And if you notice he uses the present tense which implies that it’s continuous, we never stop doing it.
* However he gives us a little encouragement because he goes on to say that if we can control our tongue, then we will have the discipline to control our whole body.

1-3, How are the illustrations of a bit, a rudder, and a fire, fitting in describing the tongue? (3-6)

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



* From what I understand, bits are the metal pieces that go into the horse’s mouth and it’s used to control them.
* The way a bit works is when it’s put into their mouth it presses down on their tongues. And the harder it presses down the easier it is to control the horse.
* So when a horse is young, they have a bit that presses down harder but after the horse is broke they use lighter bits because they don’t need that much pressure.
* If you don’t have control you are at the mercy of the horse and you go wherever the horse goes.
* And sometimes it’s not where you want to go. The same is true for your tongue, if you don’t have control of it, it will lead you where you don’t want to go.

***4 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.***



* What we learn is that the bit and the rudder have the power to direct which means that they affect the lives of people. The tongue, although it is small, just like the bit and rudder, it has power to control the body.

Proverbs 4:24 reads,

 “Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.”

* When we become a Christian, our speech should change accordingly. We shouldn’t take part in rude jokes, or vulgar speech like swearing because it doesn’t give a good influence to others.

***5 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.***



* The tongue has great power. The tongue has power to destroy. It is like a small spark that starts a huge fire.
* Every summer we see many forest fires. These fires cause terrible destruction and they all start from a small spark.
* Sometimes, our tongues can make great boasts. And these boasts can unintentionally turn a person’s life in a direction they never intended.
* Take for example King Herod. One time at his birthday party his daughter danced for the crowd. He was so pleased and boasted in front of the crowd, “Ask for anything you want and I will give it to you, up to half my kingdom.”
* But when she asked for John the Baptist’s head on a platter, he was greatly distressed.
* But because he made such a boast in front of the crowd, reluctantly he fulfilled her request.

***6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.***

* As a church we are the body of Christ. We are all connected to one another because of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of our church body.
* What we do affects each other. The tongue through gossip or negative attitude from one person can start a whole church on fire.
* And it takes so much effort to put it out. Jesus said it’s not what goes into a person that makes them unclean, but rather it’s what comes out of their mouth that defiles them. (Mt 15:11)
* Not only does it defile you but everyone you come in contact with. It corrupts the whole body, that’s why it’s like a fire.
* “set on fire by hell” - The tongue can be set on fire by the grace of God to produce the fruit of righteousness or it can be set on fire from the pit of hell.
* The tongue flatters, curses, boasts, betrays, accuses, speaks deceit, uses devious words, lies, seduces, speaks perversion, it’s spiteful, plots destruction, has the potential for death.
* No wonder one writer said, “God put the tongue in a cage behind the teeth walled in by the mouth because of its great potential to do damage.”

1-4, How can our words influence others?

 ***It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.***

* The bitter pain of a word spoken against us can hurt us for a lifetime, while it takes 8 weeks to heal broken bones.
* What others say to us and what we say to others can last a long time, probably for good.
* The casual sarcastic or critical remark can inflict a lasting injury on another person.
* In contrast, the well-timed encouragement or compliment can inspire someone for the rest of their life.
* Our tongues can defend, speak justice, rejoice, sing, speak of righteousness, bring healing, speak wisdom, build each other up.
* There are many more teaching in the book of proverbs as follows.

Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "I was only joking!" ([Proverbs 26:18-19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/proverbs/26/18-19/s_654018))

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom. ([Proverbs 10:19-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/proverbs/10/19-21/s_638019))

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. ([Proverbs 12:25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/proverbs/12/25/s_640025))

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. ([Proverbs 16:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/proverbs/16/24/s_644024))

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. ([Proverbs 18:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/proverbs/18/21/s_646021))

1. Read verses 7-12. Why is hard for man’s tongue to be tamed? (7, 8) Why should we tame our tongue? (9-12)

2-1, Read verses 7-12.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, **8** but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

**9** With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. **10** Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. **11** Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring? **12** My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

2-2, Why is hard for man’s tongue to be tamed? (7, 8)

***7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.***

* Mankind has been able to tame all kinds of animals. But the one thing that we have not been able to tame through all these years is our tongues.
* James says that it is a restless evil full of deadly poison. How many times have you been upset or walked away from someone grumbling always?
* This even happened to an intimate relationship between husband and wife, ending up being divorced.
* Even though no man can tame our tongues, God can. For what is impossible with man is possible with God.
* God can tame it when we submit our will to him when we meditate on God’s word and study the Bible. Thanks God!

2-3, Why should we tame our tongue? (9-12)

***9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.***

* James says that we praise God and curse men with the same tongue. On one hand we can thank God, like on Sundays. But during the week, we curse the people we come in contact with.
* Sometimes when we’re driving, we listen to sermons and thank God. Then suddenly someone cut us off and we will curse them frequently.
* And James is saying that this is not right, it shouldn’t be. This shouldn’t be a part of our life. We are new creations and have new tongues.
* We mature in Him and then we must gain control of our tongue. We should not curse anyone because they are made in the image of God.

Romans 12:14 says,

 “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”

 ***11 Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.***

* Everyone knows that salt water and fresh water can’t flow from the same source. It’s either one or the other.
* James is saying that we will know what kind of tree it is by what kind of fruit it bears.
* So if we claim to be Christians and yet we talk like this, maybe we are not who we claim to be. So they say that he or she is not born yet!
* Last week we heard the message where it said that our actions must match our faith. If we have faith, then we will do what God commands.
* But if we claim to be living for God but our actions don’t match after a while our speech will give that away and when it does, we are called hypocrites.

1 Pet 3:8-12 reads,

 “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. **9** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **10** For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. **11** They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. **12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

1. Read verses 13-18. How can you recognize a wise person? (13) What are the differences between wisdom from heaven and earthly wisdom? (14-17) How can we be peacemakers? (18)

3-1, Read verses 13-18.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. **14** But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. **15** Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

**17** But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. **18** Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

3-2, How can you recognize a wise person? (13)

 ***Who is wise and understanding among you?***

* We may wonder about the reason why author James came up with two wisdoms out of blue.
* So far what we speak as teachers is important. But the bottom line is that in order to teach others the truth, we must also live by the truth.
* Otherwise, how can we reinforce our teaching if our lives are not consistent with what we teach? So in order to live by the truth, we need to have wisdom.

***Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.***

* Wisdom is proven by good life. People will see believers’ good works and glorify God.

 1 Pet 2:12 reads,

 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

* Another evidence of wisdom is humility. In fact, the verse talks about “the humility that comes from wisdom.”
* Humility is having a mild and calm temper, it’s having a gentle spirit. It’s not a false humility, where our actions seem humble but our heart may be not.
* Christ humbled himself from the throne of heaven and became as a man. He submitted to God and obeyed him, even to the point of death.
* His humility came from an unwavering trust in the Lord. His humility was a reflection of the compassion of the Lord, and draws our hearts to God.
* Likewise, when we do our good deeds in true and sincere humility, it may also draw others to God.
* Good conduct and humility are evidences of the wisdom that comes from God, but there is also a wisdom that is not from above.

3-3, What are the differences between the wisdom from heaven and earthly wisdom? (14-17)

 ***But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.***

* Envy is having a rivalry or jealousy toward someone, especially when someone is blessed. Rachel in Genesis was a kind of good example in regard to “envy.”

Prov 14:30 says,

 “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

* Selfish ambition is a desire to be recognized, causing division by slandering and backbiting against the person you’re opposed to. It is a divisive spirit that seeks to break any harmonious unity.
* We betray the truth of our Christianity if bitter envy and selfish ambition have room in our hearts.

 ***15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.***

* These are the 3 enemies of man: the world, the flesh and the devil. This “wisdom” is not from God, and is not of God.
* The first is “earthly.” This type of “wisdom” is worldly. It is wise about fame, power, glory and money. It is about how to deceive others to be rich, have more power, or look successful.
* The second type is unspiritual. In other translations, this is “sensual,” and it refers to the lust of the flesh, carnal lusts, pleasures. In short, it means like an animal.
* The third and final type is demonic – influenced and inspired by the devil. Some of these thoughts include ungodly thoughts, denying that there is a God.

 ***16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.***

* The result of such wisdom out of envy and selfish ambition is disorder and every evil practice such as breaking the law or stealing to get what we want.
* We see chaos, and there’s confusion. We find every evil practice: every practice that is ethically bad, wicked and base. Practices that are destructive.

Rom 1:29-31 says,

 “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; **31** they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.”

***17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.***

* We need the wisdom from above, the wisdom from heaven. This wisdom from above is heavenly, spiritual, and from God.
* It is first of all pure. This wisdom is free from all fault, it is without blemish, immaculate, perfect. This wisdom is pure, and it purifies us.
* The wisdom above is peace-loving. While you feel the guilt, your heart beats, you feel anxious. But when we have been forgiven, we are truly relieved.
* There’s a peace in your heart, and it’s peace from heaven that the world had never given. When you experience peace, you do not want it taken away.
* The heavenly wisdom is to be considerate. In the King James version, it is rendered as “gentle.” The wisdom from above is considerate and gentle.
* The from heaven is submissiveness. That means one is not to be stubborn, but to be open to correction.
* Now, this wisdom is full of mercy. Being full of mercy means to have kindness and goodwill toward one another. It is full of a desire to do good to someone.
* When we remember the mercy God has shown us in giving his Son for our sins, we are encouraged to show mercy to others.
* Not only are we full of mercy, but we are full of good fruit. We bear good fruit, and because it is full, we bear it in abundance.
* The wisdom from above is also impartial. We are not partial to others, we do not play favorites, but love our neighbors as ourselves.
* We also are not partial to God’s word, we don’t pick and choose what to believe, but we believe the whole counsel of God in the whole Bible.
* Finally, the wisdom from above is sincere. It is true wisdom. It is the only true wisdom. But the wisdom from heaven is genuine, and it is real.
* We looked in-depth at the attributes of this wisdom. It is sourced from God, powered by God, and gives glory back to God.
* Let us ask God for an increase of wisdom, not doubting, but knowing and believing that he gives generously without finding fault.

James 1:5-6,

 “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”

3-4, How can we be peacemakers? (18)

***18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.***

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* It is kind of a natural outcome when we are equipped heavenly wisdom. We are peacemakers, reconciling the world to God through the preaching of the gospel.
* We are peacemakers, loving our neighbors as ourselves. So we sow in peace. To sow means to plant a seed.
* Even in correcting someone, we do that gently. We sow in peace, and in due time, we will reap a harvest of righteousness.
* Our fruits of righteousness will abound more and more, increasing in our peace, our love, joy, faith, hope.
* This is all for the glory of God, as we glorify God for giving us fruit, and as others glorify God in our service to them.

**Conclusion**

 If we claim to believe in Jesus, then our actions must match our words and they should be good for we are Jesus’ representatives here on earth. Others will look to us, to see what God is like, and so we should act like Jesus, and control of our tongues is a great place to start. May God bless you as you learn to tame your flammable tongue. We looked at the nature of the demonic “wisdom”, for it was earthly, unspiritual and demonic. It produces envy and strife, and results in disorder and every evil practice. Then we looked at the nature of the wisdom from above: it was heavenly, spiritual and from God. It produces love and humility, and results in peace and good works. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. So let’s circle back to v.13. “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good live, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” Are you wise? Let your wisdom show by your good deeds done in humility.

**One word: Who is wise?**