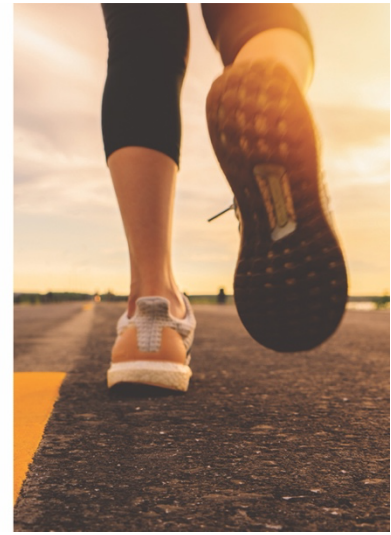




Reasons to Rejoice  
BIBLE STUDY

# WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

THE BOOK OF JAMES



## Where the Rubber Meets the Road: James Chapter 3

Please read James chapter 3 before you answer any questions. Always remember to keep the author's main point, theme, and purpose in mind as you read through the chapters. In our chapter this week, James continues to develop his general theme by using additional applications to help illustrate his point. His discussion centers on what "true faith" looks like. From the very beginning, we've learned that true faith produces maturity, endure trials, resists temptations, responds to God's Word, displays genuine love, rejects prejudices, and acts kindly to those in need. Now, in chapter 3, James continues by reminding us that true faith keeps its tongue under control, refuses to hurt others, and exercises true wisdom in their lives

Hold on to your hats, ladies! This chapter is a doozy! This famous chapter about our tongues might be one of the hardest truths to apply. It's said that the tongue is the "most exercised muscle and least controlled in our bodies." Although we all have probably read this chapter a zillion times, let's pray and ask the Spirit to help us see it as if we are reading it for the first time, allowing Him to speak to our hearts, open our eyes, and really examine our "tongue life." Let's not move through it quickly or casually, but instead, let's take time to ponder and reflect. The ultimate question this chapter asks, "What does our tongue reveal about our own heart?"

1. List the "key words" you find on your "Key Word Sheet."

2. What would you say is the specific or main theme (or themes) in this chapter?
  
3. Do you see any comparison or contrasts? Any opposites?

Read James 3:1-12. It appears that many people in the assembly wanted to become teachers. There were many false teachers on the scene, there were some who wanted this new Christianity to keep some Jewish traditions, some who didn't know enough to teach, and so on.

4. Is James condemning teaching or trying to discourage people from becoming teachers? Considering the rest of the chapter, what do you think is his purpose in verse 1?
  
5. Why do you think there is a stricter judgement for teachers? Do you think that's appropriate?
  
6. According to verses 2 and 8, does James think anyone can control their own tongue? What's his point?

As far as verse 1, James seems to be warning them to think about the responsibility they have as a teacher to control their tongues as they speak God's Word, rather than discourage them from teaching. As teachers, what is said affects many lives, both for good and bad. A teacher also can't say, "Do what I say, not what I do." A teacher's life must line up with what he or she is teaching. Swindoll wrote, "The real test of a teacher isn't what he says, but what his family says."

As we go forward, remember that the tongue, in itself, is not evil. The tongue is neutral, neither good nor bad. It's just the vehicle that brings forth what's in our hearts. (ouch)

7. Read Matthew 15:10-20 before we go any further. This gives us a good theological background and context for what James is saying.  
Summarize what Jesus is saying. Where does Jesus say the problem lies?
  
8. In verses 3-5, what three illustrations does James use to show us the influence our words can have? Are the first two necessarily negative? What about the third? Could it be positive?
  
9. List some ways that words can influence others for good.
  
10. How can they be used for destruction?

Our tongues are so small, yet they have so much power! As James says in verse 5, a tiny spark holds the power to destroy an entire forest. Curtis Vaughn wrote, "Like fire when it's controlled, the tongue held in check is a power for great good. But out of control what havoc both can cause!"

11. List the phrases found in verses 6-8 that James uses to describe the tongue.

In the Greek, the word translated "hell" in verse 6 is actually *Gehenna*, which refers to the Hinnom Valley, which runs along the south side of Jerusalem. Residents in Jerusalem would throw all their garbage in the Valley to be burned so it became a smelly, stinky trash dump! When James used this phrase, his readers would fully understand what he was talking about. When our tongues are uncontrolled, the smelly garbage that dwells in our hearts is brought forth, since the tongue is really just the messenger of what lies within.

12. After James says the tongue is a fire, a beast, and a deadly poison, what illustrations does he use in 9-12 to illustrate his point even further? (How are our tongues *unlike* nature?)

I sort of feel like James is saying that our tongues are like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. (Or maybe just mine is!) They are inconsistent ... one minute praising God and the next ... well, fill in the blank. We sing praises in church, but then tear apart the pastor at the lunch table. (Hey, watch it!) I love how James exclaims ... "These things shouldn't be so!" He's so right. We cannot tame our tongue ... only the Holy Spirit can. As we walk in the Spirit, the fruit of self-control is cultivated in our hearts which, when we ask Him for strength and power, can control our tongues. Only the Holy Spirit can tame it.

Ok ladies, it's D-Day. Time to square up, so to speak. There are some hard questions coming up. Remember we talked about ponder and reflect? Well, it's time!

13. What kind of speech are you characterized by?
  
14. Can you think of a time in your life when a person's words have harmed you? How did you handle it?
  
15. Can you think of a situation when you were the one whose words harmed someone else? Was it fixable? Did you try?
  
16. Are there any of these problems relating to the tongue that you struggle with? Complaining, bragging, lying, gossiping, criticizing, talking crudely, flippantly, or condescendingly? There are many more adjectives to choose from ...
  
17. What's the remedy for our tongue problem?
  
18. How can our words help change attitudes and perspectives? Read Numbers 13:17-33 and 14:1-45. How are Joshua and Caleb such good examples of using words positively?

Michael Lankford wrote “Our mouth has great powers. We can persuade, encourage, and build hope in others. What comes out of our mouth is probably the greatest indicator of what’s really in our hearts. If you want to know what you’re really made of, check your mouth. How do you talk? We can build or harm someone’s faith by our words. Are you positive, or negative, optimistic or pessimistic? What kind of jokes do you tell or repeat? A person with true faith is self-controlled. That’s the bottom line.”

One more quote I love, “Great people of God find a way to speak hope into others. They give a sense of purpose, of calling, of future, of destiny, to those around them. From Moses to Daniel, from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King Jr., each spoke words that brought change to many lives. Winston Churchill spoke words of promise over his country. Adolf Hitler spoke words of pain and death over his. Abraham instilled hope and future blessings over his children, King Saul spoke curses and hatred over his. The challenge before each of us is whether we will build a life with words of healing or destroy a life with words of criticism.”

19. In Chapter 1, James reminded us to ask for wisdom, because we would certainly need it. Now in chapter 3:13-18, he brings us full circle. What does true faith produce?

20. James contrasts genuine wisdom with false wisdom. From where does each originate?

21. What are the signs or “fruit” of false wisdom? Do we ever see some of the results of human or worldly wisdom active within the church? How?

Verse 14 refers to “lying against the truth.” Most scholars believe this to mean when we (or the unwise) change their truth standard to match their beliefs or lifestyles. Swindoll wrote, “When a life is out of step with Scripture, there will eventually be a manipulation of the truth to justify following a drumbeat different from God’s. The result is self-deception.”

22. Write your thoughts on the quote above. Do you see that with people you know? What about in yourself? Do you “change the truth” to adapt to a lifestyle you are choosing? Even a little?

23. How does James describe genuine wisdom, as well as the fruit of it, in verses 17-18?

24. Time to examine again. Hold your life up to the light of Scripture which describes the characteristics of a true wise person. How does it fair? (Pure, gentle, peaceable, reasonable, merciful, unwavering, etc.)

25. Why do you think humility (meekness) is such an essential sign of wisdom?

26. In what area would you like to see more Godly, true wisdom operating in your life?

27. Can you list a few other verses that relate to the words we use, or living wisely, and share them with the group?

28. How has this chapter challenged you:

- a. As a parent?
- b. As an employee?
- c. As a wife?
- d. As a student?
- e. As a friend?
- f. As a Christian woman?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** “Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” James 3:10





Consider it all  
joy, my brethren,  
when you encounter various trials,  
knowing that the testing of  
your faith produces endurance.

