

JAMES

CHAPTER 3

Reflect

As we enter into this week, take a second to reflect on what stood out most about last week's study of James chapter 2? Where did you experience the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Before beginning this week's study, take a second to pray and center on the presence of God.

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James 3:1

Throughout this chapter, James writes about the power of words. Verse 1 is a clear warning about the misuse of our words. Anyone can be convincing; but not everyone is true. Those in authority are held to an even higher standard for what they say due to the power they possess, especially when talking about God.

- Are there instances in your life when people misinterpreted God's word to you?

- What were the impacts?

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James 3:2-4

James affirms human frailty, but instructs that those who control their words to be "perfect." The word "perfect" here is the Greek word *teleios* which is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." According to Jesus in the book of Matthew, we are called to be perfect in the way we love people. (By the power of God working on you over time, this is possible.) Here, James connects this idea of "perfect" and "love" to the words we use. Going even further, he gives the analogy that your words steer your actions. What you say impacts what you do.

- Practically speaking, how do your words connect with your actions?

- Do your words reflect love to other people?

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James 3:5-6

James writes that if controlling your words is connected to love; then not controlling your words is connected to hell, a separation from love. We choose what we live into: good or bad; heaven or hell; love or hate.

- Think through this past week, what do your words say about what you choose

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James 3:7-8

The idea that we can better ourselves is not something with which James agrees. In fact, he believes that we cannot control our words. We can't, but God can. Apart from Jesus working to change our hearts, we have little power to change anything permanently. Matthew 15:18-19 says, "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."

- In what ways do you think we treat the symptoms of our actions rather than the root cause of them?

- Are there some root issues in your life right now that you need God to address

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James 3:9-12

James presents us with a paradox. For example, how can we praise God on Sunday morning and curse someone while driving Sunday afternoon? We do both regularly, but we are called to live differently. As followers of Jesus, we should not be okay with this paradox existing in our lives. Combat this contradiction by taking time *everyday this week to recite this verse: Psalm 19:14 "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

- How can you catch yourself from living into this paradox of both blessing and cursing?

- What can be your daily reminder to bless people with your words?

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James 3:13-18

Here, James contrasts godly wisdom from what comes naturally to most people. Often we embrace our gut, our own wisdom, and what feels natural to us, yet James contrasts these things with truth. Just because it "feels right" doesn't mean it's true. Truth produces peace, obedience, mercy, fairness, and genuineness. Conversely, selfishness, jealousy, disorder and strife come naturally. Apart from Jesus working in our lives, we say and do disastrous things. For most of us, God doesn't change who we are overnight. Instead, God often works through "just noticeable changes," transforming us over time.

- Are you willing to let God help you master your words, since words determine your actions?

- If you are willing, is there a way that you can daily invite God to help you do this?

Words don't come with receipts; you can't take them back. James implores us to value the power of our words.

- What was the most powerful use of words in your life?

- Has someone ever greatly impacted you just through what they said?

- Was it for good or bad?

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