

# JAMES

MARK IT UP

## James 3:1-12 **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 4/10/22

**Icebreaker:** How have you been positively impacted by someone else's words about you?

**Getting Started:** Read James 3:1-12 as a group.

Select 2-3 questions that you think will be most helpful for your discussion.

**1.** James begins the chapter with instruction for those brothers and sisters in the church who desire to be teachers. Why does he caution them against it? James says that, first off, teachers will be judged more strictly. He's likely referring to the level of influence a teacher in the church has over a community of people where many would have been illiterate and their only access to God's Word was through the teaching of others. We could include in this the fact that "we all stumble in many ways," but a teacher's life is supposed to conform closely to the things that are being taught!

*Application:* Have you had a desire to be a teacher in the church? What do you think of James' warning?

While James says "not many should become teachers," he's not excluding everyone! Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, for example, list teaching as one of the many gifts that the Holy Spirit supplies to people in the church for its good. It's worth asking, though, whether we fully appreciate the fact that teachers face a greater accountability or judgment...not something to take lightly!

**2.** In verses 2 through the first half of 5, James makes the claim that, if we can control the tongue, we can control the rest of the body. What do you think he means?

The illustrations of the bit and rudder offer examples of how something small can guide and direct something larger. The small tongue, then, is like the bit and rudder—it's able to control the larger body. The tongue is often the most impulsive and reactive part of our body. It can speak even before we think! If we can control it, according to James, we can control the rest of who we are.

*Application:* What kind of situations have you been in where you've demonstrated James' point that none of us can perfectly control our tongues?

This isn't intended to be uncomfortable for anyone, so it's fine to keep things general: "I got cut off in traffic," "I was surprised by my friend's criticism," etc... "and these caused me to react with my words in a way I didn't expect."

**3.** From the second half of verse 5 through 6, what do you think James is expressing about the potential damage of the words we say?

First off, this verse is notoriously difficult to translate, so you may find that people who bring other translations will be reading something slightly different from yours. With that said, the general theme is that the little tongue can cause damage that spreads like a wildfire.

*Application:* How have another's words impacted you in a negative way? Some may find this to be too difficult to talk about if they've experienced something hurtful and/or recent. Pay attention, though, to how some may share about an experience that happened long ago. It's difficult to forget the accusing or critical words spoken against us, even after time has passed.

**4.** James says in verse 8 that, "no human being can tame the tongue." How is this "wildness" displayed in life, or what different ways does the untamed tongue express itself?

The list here could be long...gossip, slander, cursing, deceit, boasting, arrogance, rudeness, anger, etc.

*Application:* In what situations or circumstances do you find it most difficult to tame your tongue?

Examples here might include, "when I feel slighted or disrespected," "when I get cut off in traffic," "when people don't do what they say they'll do," etc.

**5.** Read Luke 6:43-45. What connection does Jesus make between the words we speak and the condition of our hearts?

This is a softball question since the text says, "out of the abundance of his heart the mouth speaks." Note the language here that's so similar to what James writes. Like a plant that can only produce fruit of its kind, the tongue can only produce fruit that reflects the condition of the heart.

*Application:* How can this connection between our words and our hearts help us to lean more heavily on the grace of God given through Jesus?

Our words can so often serve as an unwelcome reminder of our struggle with sin. We can grow discouraged, but we can also learn to thank God for His ongoing grace in our lives that is transforming our hearts.