



## Lesson 3

### Teachers (Verse 1)

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

In the first chapter of James we saw that James was referring to words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23:10-12.

“Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

James now refers to instructors, or teachers. Teachers have a great responsibility because of their influences on other people, and we should not rush to be teachers. This approach requires humility, which is not natural for us. Also, teachers will be judged strictly. Teachers must make sure that they are teaching right things and not lies.

### Controlling the Tongue (Verses 2-8)

“For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.

If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.

Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!

And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind,

but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.”

In those days a lot of teaching was by speaking out loud. James goes on to give advice about how we should speak to each other.

He gives examples of small things that have great effects – far out of proportion to their size. These include bits in horses’ mouths and rudders on ships. The bit is small but can be used to control a big horse: a small rudder can be used to steer a very big ship. Fires start small and grow very large. A tongue is a very small part of our body, but it too can do a lot of damage by thoughtless or godless talking. Sadly, it is difficult for us to control it.

If something catches alight it can cause an enormous fire – setting a forest on fire. This is then difficult to put out. It would be better to avoid the small fire in the first place. Similarly, a small saying can cause enormous trouble, which is difficult to heal. Better not to say the bad thing to start with.

Wild animals can sometimes be tamed, but we find it extremely difficult to tame our tongues.

There was no email in James’ day, but nowadays we can do a lot of harm with unkind emails. An email might be sent to one person but it can soon be sent to lots of people and so can do a lot of damage. We need to be careful and think before we communicate.

### Be Careful what we say (Verses 9-12)

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.



From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?

Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water

We also show our inconsistency and hypocrisy by our communication. A spring either has fresh or salt water – not both. A tree bears one type of fruit- not lots of different ones. But our tongues can bless and curse in the same sentence. This is very bad. We cannot really love God if we behave like this.

### **Wisdom from Above (Verses 13-18)**

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James now goes deeper than the tongue – to the thoughts that we have. What we say reflects what we are thinking. So we must also try to control what we think. Jesus said:

“But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (Matthew 15:18-19).

If we are wise then we should be humble. But it is hard to be humble, as we are naturally proud. We love ourselves! If we are selfish or jealous then we are not wise at all. Other people may not see these faults in us, and think we are lovely. But God can see our hearts and minds. If we are thinking about God then we will have pure and peaceful thoughts and we will be kind and merciful to other people. This is God’s wisdom – not man’s natural wisdom. If we are like this then we shall always seek peace and never be trouble-makers.

