

BIBLE EXTENSION COURSE PROGRAM

The Faculty of Speech

Lesson No.5

Required Reading
James 3:1-18

Epistle of James – EJ Series
by Clifton H Carpenter

- **The Tongue is Powerful**
- **The Tongue is Perverse**
- **The Tongue is Polluted**

Key Verse: James 3:13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

INTRODUCTION Mature Christians can be identified by their Attitude toward suffering (chapter 1) and by their Obedience to the Word of God (chapter 2) Now James tells us that a Christian's speech is another test of Spiritual Maturity.

The Faculty of Speech. We read and hear many words every day and forget what a wonderful thing a word is! When God gave us the faculty of speech, He gave us a tool to build with; but it can also become a weapon of destruction.

Spokesman for God. One of the most important aspects of our life as Christians involves the use of words. Sharing with someone else the Word of God is the responsibility of every believer.
Hebrews 5:12-13

Slow to Speak. James in chapter 1 warned the Christian to be "*slow to speak to God*" when dealing with personal trials and temptations. He now offers a second warning to be "*slow to speak for God.*"

Many believers aspire to teach others publicly. James warns that God will judge more strictly those who speak on His behalf.
James 3:1

Common Sin. James the Just, a member of the Jerusalem Council reminds the readers of his own inadequacy in the use of words. The person who never offends in words is a perfect person "*complete person*" with no room for growth. Therefore, a person who speaks much is going to err in his or her speech. The tongue is the hardest member of the body to control. Although not all sins are the same as those shared by others, there is one sin that is common to all, namely, "*sin of the tongue.*" James 3:2

Controlled Tongue. "*Winsome speech demands a wise source.*" The failure to bridle the tongue, mentioned in (1:26) is now expanded. James uses three paired illustrations to portray the Power of the tongue. The imagery makes clear. Small though it is, the tongue is "*powerful*" and prone to "*perversion*" and "*pollution*"
Nothing can trip a believer more than a dangling tongue.

The Tongue is Powerful. The tongue may be small but it is influential. Three illustrations make this point clear.

- **Horse and Bit** – little bit turns a grown horse
- **Ship and Rudder** – small rudder guides a large ship
- **Forest and Spark** – small spark will burn a large forest.

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The Tongue is Perverse. The ancient Greeks took pride in the ability of humans to tame “*subdue*” the animal kingdom. Parrots are taught to speak and snakes have been charmed; “*but his own tongue he can’t control.*”

We often think that our words are unimportant, but the wrong word can direct the listener into the wrong path. An idle word, a questionable story, a half-truth, or deliberate lie could change the course of life and lead it to destruction.

On the other hand, the right word used by the Holy Spirit could direct a soul out of sin and into salvation. The tongue can only be “*subdued*” by the Holy Spirit. James 3:6-7

The Tongue is Polluted. No one can tame the tongue because it is a “*restless evil*” an unruly, unsteady, reeling and staggering evil (like the “*unstable*” man of 1:8) Worst yet, the tongue is full of deadly poison. James 3:8

My Brethren. Man’s tongue is similar to the forked tongue of a snake, it emits praise “*saying a good word*” of our Lord and at the same time spews out curses. James 3:9

James turns to the natural elements to illustrate his point.

- Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same source? **NO!** James 3:11-12
- Can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? **NO!**

Power of Delight. One water source can yield only one kind of water; and a tree can only produce fruit of its own kind. A salt spring can not produce “*fresh water*” any more than a fallen human being can naturally produce “*pure words.*”

A fountain, a tree, and the tongue all have power to delight.

Controlled Thought. Both controlled speech and controlled thought are necessary for conducting Godly conversation. Therefore, it takes a wise person to control his mind and his mouth. “*Who is Wise and Understanding among You?*”

- **Wise** – a person with moral insight and skill in the practical issues of life. James 3:13
- **Understanding** – a person with intellectual perception.

Wisdom in the mind affects one’s use of his or her tongue.

Let him show. True wisdom is not measured by “*degrees*” but by “*deeds*”

Wisdom is Humble. This wisdom does not result in what one thinks, but in what one does. **Gentleness** – Lit. it describes a horse that someone had broken and had trained to submit to a bridle. It pictures strength under control, specifically the Holy Spirit’s control. The truly wise person is humble. The evidence of a Proper Action, it is a deliberate placing oneself under “*divine authority*” **Humbly Submissive.**

Wisdom is Gracious. True wisdom makes no room for bitter envy “*zealous jealousy*” or for selfish ambition “*factious rivalry*” to boast – Lit. “*exult*” in such an attitude is to “*lie against the truth*” James 3:14

Disorder. Envy and selfish ambition can only produce disorder, confusion and every evil practice. Also, jealousy and ambitions which promote self are manifestation of arrogance. This attitude comes from the spirit “*philosophy*” of this world, and it is demon-like in its deception, hypocrisy and evil. James 3:15

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God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Therefore, ungracious jealousy and personal ambition are not a part of the wisdom He provides. 1 Corinthians 14:33

The Devil and Discord. Satan is at work in committees, groups and churches to drive people apart and disturb personal relationships.

The Christian that sows discord is engaged in Satan's work and not God's work.
James 3:16

Wisdom is Peaceable. The believers do not need to advertise the fact that they are wise; you will see it expressed in their daily life *“edifying conversations and good behavior”*

True Wisdom is Pure. Lit. *“free of any defilements”* It is true in appearance and it is Peaceable. *“peace-loving” “peace-practicing”* and *“peace-yielding”*
James 3:17

A Harvest of Righteousness. Peace is the *“seed sown”* that yields a harvest of righteousness. To raise a harvest of righteousness demands a certain kind of climate.

A crop of righteousness can not be produced in a climate of bitterness and selfishness. Righteousness will grow only in a climate of peace. Therefore, a person committed to preserving peace will not sow words that antagonize people.

A mouth filled with praise results from a mind filled with purity. James 3:18

Stop! It's time to challenge your thinking. Using the Ladder as a guide, think about how each principle on the rung of the ladder relate to the Topic given in this chapter.

- Answer the five questions on the chart honestly
- Re-adjust your *“principle of thoughts”* accordingly

NOTE – Please visit the Text with PowerPoint Format for more details.

