

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Sept. 11, 2011

Passage: James 3:1-5

Memory Passage: Proverbs 18:21

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:1-5a.** As James moves into instruction on our tongues, what connections do you see between 3:1-5 and chapters 1 & 2.? As two examples of several, see 1:19 & 26.

(b) Why does James begin his instruction on the tongue with a reference to teachers? Is he referring to all teaching or to a more formal recognition of an office or title of teacher or both? How do you know?

(c) We might assume that James is speaking to churches in which many people desire to become teachers. Realizing that in the 1st century teachers or rabbis would gain a following and have disciples who might pay for the chance to sit under a particular teacher's tutelage, can you think of ways that this might have been a temptation to this group of believers scattered throughout the kingdom because of their faith? What are some wrong motives people might have today for becoming teachers? Why might it be tempting for you to attain the status of teacher?

(d) **Read Matt. 23:1-12.** What does Jesus have to say about the teachers of his day? What affect might Jesus' teaching have on what his brother James writes in James 3? Is your sense that either Jesus or James is against everyone becoming teachers? Upon what basis do you give your answer?

(e) *Family: Read Matt. 12:33-37.* Gather a piece of fruit, a pitcher of juice that matches (i.e. an apple and apple juice, or grapes and grape juice, or even better, if you have a juicer use it for this illustration!), a bowl of dirt, a pitcher of water, and two clear glasses. Place the fruit in front of the pitcher of juice (or juicer) and the dirt in front of the pitcher of water. Ask questions like: "What do you expect to be made from this fruit? What do you expect to be made by mixing this dirt in water?" Then juice the fruit (if you have a juicer) and mix the dirt in the water, pouring each into a glass. Then ask: "Which would you rather drink & why? Would you consider one of these good and one bad, and if so, which one?" Then read the passage and teach it using the object lesson as illustration. Teach that Jesus uses "justified" in the same sense as James did in James 2: Our words are an outward manifestation (proof of, justification of) an inward change in our heart (authentic faith, salvation).

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:1-5a & Matt. 12:33-37.** What reason does James give for us to be hesitant about becoming a teacher? What is this "greater strictness" with which we will be judged? What is the purpose of this warning? How does Matt. 12:33-37 affect our understanding of this judgment?

(b) When James says "my brothers" in v. 1 is he limiting his comments about teaching to men? Upon what basis do you answer (hint: How does James consistently use this term in his letter?)

(c) Do you desire to become, or are you currently, a teacher? Has studying this verse changed you desire? Why or why not? Are your motives for desiring to teach God-centered or man-centered? How have you assessed them?

(d) Whether or not you hold or desire to hold a formal office or title or responsibility of teacher, what other ways are you involved in teaching? What responsibilities do you have with regard to this teaching? How does Matt. 12:33-37 affect this (Hint: Is Jesus saying that we should control our words so that we are good, or that if we are good, we will control our words?) What have you learned so far in James about your speech, hearing, and actions that informs your responsibility as a teacher?

(e) *Family: Read James 3:1-2* and ask your family to tell you what they think verse 2 means. Assess their understanding and teach this verse to them. One way to do this is to replace the word "stumble" with the word "sin" and reread the verse (James is referring to sin when he says that we all stumble, and this is the same word translated in 2:10 as "fail" to refer to someone who sins, specifically by showing partiality, and is guilty of transgressing the entire law.) Remind them that our tongue is a mighty weapon that can easily be used for sin, and that if we can discipline our use of the tongue then we will mature.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:1-5a.** What does James mean when he says, "we all stumble in many ways?" To what is he referring when he says that those who do not stumble in what they say are "perfect?" (See James 2:8-11 where "fails" in v. 10 is the same Greek word as "stumble" in 3:2).

(b) James uses the illustration of a horse and bit to describe what he says at the end of v. 2. How does this ability to not stumble in what we say lead to us being "able also to bridle (our) whole body?" In what ways does sinning in our speech cause our bodies to be out of control?

(c) What benefits have you seen from better bridling your tongue since you studied James 1:26 several weeks ago? Be ready to share some examples with your group that will bring glory to God and edification to the saints.

(d) *Family*: **Read James 3:1-3**. Recreate the bridle & bit you used when we studied James 1:26 several weeks ago. In that lesson we focused on what it meant to bridle one's tongue, so today you will focus on the bit being able to control the entire body. Using the bit & bridle, show by example how one's entire body is controlled by such a small bit. Then discuss some examples of how keeping one's tongue bridled results in gaining maturity and overcoming sin.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:1-5a**. Why does James use the imagery of a ship & its rudder to explain our tongue? Is he saying something different about our tongues in v. 4 than he did in vs. 2-3 or is he saying the same thing with a different metaphor?

(b) I hope you have noticed that 3:1-5 focuses on the positive uses of our tongues. 3:5b-12 will challenge us with negative uses. So thinking positively, in what kinds of “great things” can our tongues boast?

(c) **Read Prov. 10:11a, 15:1a, 15:22, 15:31, 16:24 & 18:21**. Write down the great things that we can accomplish with our tongues. Then ask yourself these questions and write down the answers by each verse: “Do I do this with my tongue? If so, do I do it often enough? What ways could I have accomplished these actions with my tongue during the past week? What will I do to look for ways to accomplish these actions with my tongue during the weeks to come? What specific situations can I think of that could come my way this week that will challenge my use of my tongue & how will I decide, right now, before the situation arises, to use it?”

(d) *Family*: **Read James 3:4-5a**. Go to this website: <http://www.menkent.dk/piclexa.html> and show your family how small a rudder is compared to the ship. Click on the pictures that show the immensity of this cargo ship, and then click on the 6th picture down to show the top of the rudder, and you can show the smallness of the rudder in comparison to the ship. Explain that a small turn in the angle of this rudder changes the direction of the ship “wherever the will of the pilot directs” even though the ship is large and the rudder small. Then explain that our tongue is small indeed compared to our body, “yet it boasts of great things.” Explain what some of these great things are that our tongue can do (i.e. teach, praise, edify, encourage, sing, etc.), and then relate these to how the bridled tongue bridles the entire body.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:1-5a**. Go to this site and read this short blog post: http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/fill-your-mouth-with-life-not-death?utm_source=Desiring+God&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=445e737530-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN After you have read this, spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal ways in which He desires you to more resemble Him in these areas, and to open your heart to the Scripture passages quoted in this post. Then open your Bible to the passages Jon quotes and read & meditate on them as you seek to be further transformed into the image and likeness of Christ.

(b) *Family*: Lead your family through the discussion & application found in (a) above.

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Consider Your Tongue Part I: Boast of Great Things!