

FIRM FOUNDATION CLASS



How To Live A Practical Christian Life Lesson 10

HOW TO LIVE A PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

James, in the book of James, deals with the practicalities of the Christian life:

1. Practical Evaluation of Trials - 1:2-12
2. Practical Insight into Temptation - 1:12-18
3. Practical Obedience to the Word - 1:19-27
4. Practical Evaluation of Others - 2:1-13
5. Practical Faith - 2:14-26
6. Practical Use of the Tongue - 3:1-11
7. Practical Wisdom - 3:13-18
8. Practical Advice Against Unholiness - 4:1-12
9. Practical Plans - 4:13-17
10. Practical Patience - 5:1-12
11. Practical Prayer - 5:13-18
12. Practical Love - 5:19-20

Everyone wants to be a "practical" Christian. They want their "religion" to work seven days a week not just on Sunday. James tells us how to succeed in this worthy goal.

It will be impossible to deal with all of the above stated themes, but we will at least deal with one - the practical use of the tongue. Nothing could be more practical than to deal with one of the things all of us do daily - talk.

From the book of James we will look at five themes regarding the tongue:

1. The Distribution of the Tongue
2. The Description of the Tongue
3. The Danger of the Tongue
4. The Quality of the Tongue
5. The Deliverance from the Tongue

I. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE TONGUE

There is a liberal distribution of Scriptures throughout James dealing with the tongue; therefore, it is safe to say that James had or knew of this problem in the churches to which he wrote.

- A. "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." (*James 1:26*).

Some fools evaluate themselves as "religious." Yet, this evaluation is a far cry from God's evaluation if they cannot control their talkativeness.

- B. "Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it." (*James 4:11*).

Evidently, James knew of believers who were in the habit of speaking against each other. Do we have a similar problem? James says that if we do, we are taking the position of judge, which only God has the right to hold.

- C. "Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," be no, or you will be condemned." (*James 5:12*).

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TONGUE - *James 3:1-5*

Before James describes the tongue, he gives a warning and a description of perfection. In verse 1, James warns about all making a big rush to teach. James says that the teacher will be judged with a stricter judgment - no doubt because greater knowledge brings greater responsibility. Also, because the teacher is responsible to make sure that all the rest know the truth. If he taught improper doctrine he would not just corrupt one, but many. In verse 2, James says the mark of perfection is the control of the tongue.

A. The tongue is described by comparing it to a bit. - *James 3:3*

Bits are small but they have a great effect. Even so, the tongue is a small member, as compared to our arms, legs, etc., but none have a greater impact on our lives and the lives of others than our tongue.

B. The tongue is described by comparing it to a rudder. - *James 3:4*. The ship is great but a small rudder can direct it. Again, we see a large impact due to a small force.

C. The tongue is described by comparing it to a spark. - *James 3:5*

All of us have seen the charred remains of a forest set ablaze by a spark from a careless cigarette smoker. Even so, a small word, a little gossip can get a whole church or neighborhood aflame with devastating gossip.

III. THE DANGER OF THE TONGUE - *James 3:6-8*

The danger of the tongue is seen in the fact that it is:

A. A Destructive Instrument

" . . . The tongue is a fire" (*James 3:6*). Fire can be useful, but nothing is more destructive. It can gut a building or a whole town unless put out.

B. A Defiling Instrument

The tongue has so many evils coming from it that it is a "*world of iniquity*." It can curse, criticize, condemn (judge), contaminate! All of this adding up to a total sum of a "*world of iniquity*."

It "defiles the entire body." Our minds are corrupted until eventually our bodies are corrupted; then all who listen to us are defiled.

C. A Disturbing Instrument

The tongue disturbs our whole life. There is no wonder the Proverb writer said, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity." (*Proverbs 21:23*)

IV. THE QUALITY OF THE TONGUE - *James 3:9-12*

There is a tragic inconsistency found in these verses. There is a dual purpose of the tongue that ought not to be. The tongue is used to bless God; then, it is used to curse men. The tongue's duality and inconsistency are seen by comparing it with nature.

A. A Fountain - *James 3:11* "Can a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?"

B. A Fig Tree - *James 3:12* "Can a fig tree produce olives? We would ask, "Can an apple tree produce peaches?" The answer is, "Of course not!"

C. A Vine - *James 3:12* "Can a vine produce figs?"

D. Water - *James 3:12* "Can a fountain yield both salt water and spring water?"

We also see how ridiculous it is to think of these things, but, how can a Christian speak evil or gossip and then praise God? It is just as inconsistent!

V. THE DELIVERANCE FROM THE TONGUE - *James* 3:13-18

James 3:13-18 is primarily a description of practical wisdom. It is also an answer to one who cannot control his tongue. The answer for the need of deliverance is a heavenly wisdom that will control our speech and help us speak in the wisdom God gives. Two types of wisdom are described:

A. Description of Earthly Wisdom

1. Its Source - *James* 3:15

- a. Earthly - Its horizon does not extend beyond this world. It is inspired with only earth's values in mind. It disregards God's point of view.
- b. Natural - It does not come from the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians* 2:14), therefore, it is not "spiritual."
- c. Demonic - It is demon-like because it is full of pride and selfish ambition.

The source of many people's speech arises from no higher source than these adjectives describe: earthly, natural, demonic.

2. Its Fruit – *James* 3:14, 16

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| a. Bitterness | d. Arrogance |
| b. Jealousy | e. Disorder |
| c. Selfish Ambition | f. Every Evil Work |

B. Description of Heavenly Wisdom - *James* 3:17-18

1. Pure - God's wisdom, which should govern our speech, is, above all, free from filth and contamination. In the context (*James* 3:14, 16) our speech should be free from bitterness, jealousy, selfishness, ambition, arrogance etc.
2. Peaceable - God's wisdom will not allow our speech to get into controversy all the time. Purity must precede peacemaking; however, it is not only recorded thus here, but also in *Matthew* 5:8-9.
3. Gentle - If our wisdom is marked by gentleness, so will our speech. We will be sweetly reasonable.
4. Reasonable - Easy to be entreated or open to reason.
5. Full of Mercy - Forgiving.
6. Full of Good Fruits - Instead of speech that brings death, our speech will be that which brings life. *Ephesians* 4:29-31; *Colossians* 4:6
7. Unwavering - We will not be deceitful in speech, but we will say what we mean.
8. Without Hypocrisy - We will not pretend to have done what we have not or be what we are not. Our speech will be governed by these rules.