

DEVOTIONALS FOR JAMES 3

STRICT JUDGMENT

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

JAMES 3:1

Every time I read these words; I pause.

As a teacher of God's Word for many years, I have discovered the weight behind this statement. No doubt James understood this as well. He was one of the first teachers in the first church ever established, the church of Jerusalem. His letter was a traveling teaching that carried a message that reached many churches in the Mediterranean.

So if you aspire to teach God's Word, never forget the "greater strictness." These words are not the words of men, but God. This Bible was written down by fallible men who bore the Gospel's weight. It's God's inspired words, not man's, and we should treat them as such.

ASK THIS: Do you treat every word you read in the Bible with care, acting on it as the very Word of God?

DO THIS: Revere God's Word and the God of the Bible.

PRAY THIS: God, I love you. Thanks for speaking to me through the Bible, which is the very word that came from you.

SET ABLAZE

*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!*

JAMES 3:5

A small spark can cause great damage. Many of us know firsthand the power of small fires. The same is true of our tongue. That small muscle within our mouth lights fires all the time. Fires that have ramifications in people's lives that last a lifetime. Phrases like "you always" and "you never" start great fires. Shouts like "I hate you," brand fiery scars onto the human heart. Quick-tempered declarations like "I'm not sure I ever loved you," sear the soul. But even though we have felt the fire of words like these, we often don't consider the effects when we say these things ourselves. Too late we realize that we cannot retract these sparks of words that have started a fire we cannot stop.

ASK THIS: What words did you say yesterday that have started a fire today?

DO THIS: Give attention to the words you spoke yesterday and the ones you will speak today.

PRAY THIS: God, shut my mouth when I am about to say something that will hurt the Gospel's spread in a person's life. I know your words give life, so let not mine get in your way.

UNTAMED

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.

JAMES 3:7-8

I'm sorry, but I laugh every time I read these words from James. The hyperbole is extreme and yet simultaneously spot on. Can we really tame wild animals but not the tongue? And yet, all we need to do is to do to tame the tongue is close our lips! Then, to add insult to injury, James says it's "full of deadly poison." So right when I want to laugh I consider all the restless evil and venomous poison I have spewed on the world. And then immediately, all the injurious memories of hurtful words spewed by others come flooding back—and my laughter turns to mourning.

ASK THIS: How do you need to tame your untamed tongue?

DO THIS: Close your upper and lower lips together before saying something you'll regret.

PRAY THIS: God, forgive me for my venomous words.

THE MEEKNESS OF WISDOM

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

JAMES 3:13

To be meek is not to be weak. Meekness requires stamina, long-suffering, patience, and self-will. Too often we fail to see the nature of this word and confuse it with cowardice. But this is an unwise comparison. The older we get, the more we realize that meekness means bringing conduct into submission, and with this comes a pearl of great wisdom. So are you ready to conduct good works in the wisdom of meekness?

ASK THIS: What one action do you need to take today to be meek and thus wise?

DO THIS: Take that action.

PRAY THIS: God, give me the courage to be meek. Help me stand fast when afflicted, to be strong when I feel weak. And God, make me wiser.

VILE PRACTICES

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

JAMES 3:16

Do you ever wonder why there is so much disorder in the world today? What is the root cause of all our issues: rioting, disease, violence, addiction, terrorism, racism, and political controversies? These issues arise not because we are inherently moral and righteous people but because of our jealousy and selfish ambitions. Jealousy arises from thoughts or feelings of insecurity and fear in response to present deficiencies. But when these jealousies combine with a selfish ambition, they are a one-two punch resulting in disorder, producing vile practices.

ASK THIS: What jealousy and selfish ambition do you need to address?

DO THIS: Find your provision and value in God.

PRAY THIS: God, help me stop contributing to our world's disorder and vile practices today. Change my heart and make me more like you.

WISDOM'S PROCESS

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

JAMES 3:17

This is a remarkable insight. It's full of wisdom for any follower of God. James is aware that true wisdom only comes from above. The wise followers does six things:

- *Handles every situation in a manner that is peaceful and gentle.*
- *Open to conversation yet knows godly reason only comes from above.*
- *Merciful, knowing that harm could be inflicted with his authority and power.*
- *Fruitful in righteousness and good deeds.*
- *Makes impartial judgments.*
- *Motivated from a pure and sincere heart.*

There's your checklist for today. Work on one aspect and grow in wisdom's process.

ASK THIS: What characteristic of wisdom do you need to work on?

DO THIS: Work it and be wiser today than yesterday.

PRAY THIS: God, give me supernatural wisdom from above. Make me as wise as Solomon.