

The Untamable Flammable Tongue

James 3:1-12

Key Verse: 10

1. Read Verse 1. Who was James warning about becoming a teacher? And why? Does (or should) James' admonishment about judging teachers more strictly still apply today? (Luke 12:48) Would (or should) a similar warning apply to becoming a substance abuse counselor or a sponsor?
2. Read verse 2. James says, "if anyone makes no mistakes in what he says, he is a perfect man." Is anyone a perfect man? Why is James emphasizing being perfect in Verse 3:2 and also back in Verse 1:4 ("be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing")? How can we move closer to perfection? In verse 2, is James talking about what we do say or what we don't say?
3. Read verses 3-6. James gives four examples of a small thing controlling or overpowering a large one. What are they? Why does he emphasize the negative example of the fire so much more than the positive examples of the horse's bit or ship's rudder? (Matthew 15:11, 18-19)
4. What are some examples of an untamed tongue? (Proverbs 12:18-19, 13:3, 16:27, 17:7, 18:8, 25:18, Matt 7:15, Eph 4:25, Philippians 2:14) There's an old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Is it true?
5. Read verses 7-12. If no human being can control the tongue (Verse 8), why bother trying? (Psalm 140:1-3) Have you ever said contradictory things as in Verses 9-10? Which speech pattern represents your true identity? How is the power of words used by the Holy Spirit within a person of faith?

Something to think about: Do your words more often help than hurt? Do they reveal your true self, or do they conceal you from others? Do they hide God, or do they praise him? Do you say the same words when someone is present as when he's absent? Are you more likely to wield your tongue as a weapon of your flesh, or employ it as an instrument of the Spirit?