

James 3 – Study Guide

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So 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! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Icebreaker:

What is your favorite flavor of jellybean and why?

Verse 1: Verse one speaks to teachers – specifically Bible teachers. Conceptually however, we all teach people around us whether it's our children, other people's children or even our peers. Do you find this verse encouraging or discouraging and why?

Verse 2: In what ways have you stumbled in what you've said?

Verses 3-5: In what ways have you seen your tongue direct your way of life?

Verses 5-8: Have you witnessed someone else's life set on fire by what they say? How have you seen it damage them?

What advice would you give to someone whose tongue has set their life on fire?

Verses 9-12: The tongue can be like fresh water and benefit those around us. How can we train our tongues to be beneficial?

Verses 13-16: How do we identify and then combat bitter jealousy and selfish ambition?

Verses 17-18: How do we gain or improve in the qualities listed out in verse 17?

What practical steps can we take to grow in these areas?