

BLUEPRINT

FOR A FAITH THAT WORKS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
James 3.1-12 | July 21, 2019

Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue “building our house on the rock,” so when – not if, when – the rains come down, the streams rise up, and the winds blow and beat against our house, it will not fall! This is the purpose of James’ letter to the earliest Christians, and to us, too!

In this study we engage our use of words. What an incredibly relevant topic! How should followers of Jesus talk?

II. Connecting with One Another

Think of that old children’s rhyme, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Is it true? Why or why not? What stories could you share to illustrate your perspective?

III. Study the Text

a. Read James 3.1-2.

Why does James discourage his fellow believers from becoming teachers?

What issue could James be trying to correct in verse 1?

b. How is it reassuring to know that “we all stumble in many ways”?

c. How do you understand the second half of verse 2?

How would explain what James is saying? Try writing it in your own words here:

d. Would you consider your speech to be generally positive, encouraging, and life-giving or usually negative and discouraging? Mark your response on this scale:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Negative

Positive

Why did you give yourself the rating you did?

How would it be different if you ranked your text message, email, or social media communication, where you can’t see someone’s face or hear their voice!?

e. Read James 3.3-4.

What point is James trying to make in these verses?

How is the tongue like a bit? How is it like a rudder?



f. Read James 3.5-6.

N.T. Wright explains, "We know that one word out of place can ruin a career or bring down a government. One unwise remark, reported and circulated on the Internet, can cause riots on the other side of the world."

Where have you seen significant damage caused by a few words?

g. Read James 3.7-8.

Why do you think James is so pessimistic about the tongue?

h. Throughout the Scriptures, God speaks – most profoundly He speaks through Jesus, who is referred to as "The Word" in John 1.

How should the reality that God speaks affect how we use our words?

i. Read James 3.9-12.

These verses highlight the inconsistencies of the tongue. How could we be increasingly consistent with our words?

j. When have you been blessed through other people's words? How?

k. Which of James' metaphors (bits, rudders, fire, water, tree) most gets your attention? Why?

l. How does James 3.1-12 motivate you to be more careful about how you speak?

m. In what ways could you bless both friends and enemies, family members and coworkers, neighbors and strangers with your words this week?

Try making a list of people you could speak encouraging words of life to this week: Who are they? How do you know them? What would be encouraging to them?

IV. Pray

a. Ask God to show you how you use your words, text messages, emails, and social media posts,

b. Confess any ways your words have not been encouraging and life-giving,

c. Pray for the ministry of Good Shepherd, that we would boldly declare the Word of God!

V. Digging Deeper

a. Read Matthew 12.33-37. How does Jesus' statement, "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" connect with James 3.1-12?

So the mouth is "the tattletale of the heart"! It's been explained that "what drives your mouth is your heart. The problem is not only the words you say but also the heart that produces them... Speech is a heart issue. That's why words are so powerful."

b. Warren Wiersbe offers "twelve words that can transform your life" (and others lives too!): Please, Thank you, I'm sorry, I love you, and I'm praying for you.

