

# **JAMES 3 and WORDS**

# JAMES

## Be Slow to Speak

- James 3:1 Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment.
- This is the transition verse between the sections on (1) being quick to hear (God's Word) and (2) being slow to speak (our words)
- This verse looks back on the judgment of James 2:12-13 and forward to what James will say on speech
- But why is a teacher held to a stricter judgment?

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- James 3: <sup>13</sup> Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't **boast** and **deny** the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. <sup>18</sup> And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace.

# PRINCIPLE 1

## THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

- Proverbs 17

<sup>27</sup> The one who has knowledge restrains his words, and one who keeps a cool head is a person of understanding.

<sup>28</sup> Even a fool is considered wise when he keeps silent—discerning, when he seals his lips.

- James 1:<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, **slow to speak**, and slow to anger....<sup>26</sup> If anyone thinks he is religious without **controlling his tongue**, his religion is useless and he deceives himself.

- James 3:<sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is mature, able also to control the whole body.

# PRINCIPLE 2

## RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF YOUR WORDS

- Proverbs 18
  - <sup>21</sup> Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
- James 3:<sup>3</sup> Now if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we direct their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup> And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup> So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

# PRINCIPLE 2 continued

## DESTRUCTIVE AREAS OF SPEECH

- Gossip – rumors about people of a personal or private nature shared with another person who does not have a legitimate need to know
- Slander – statement that is injurious to a person's reputation even if the statements are false
  - Is it slander if you did not know it was false?
  - What if you repeat something you heard or read without making any effort to verify it was true?
- Malice – gossip shared with a desire to harm another person out of extreme ill will or spite

# PRINCIPLE 3

## THERE IS NOTHING EDIFYING OR GODLY ABOUT GOSSIP

- Proverbs 11

<sup>13</sup> A gossip goes around revealing a secret,  
but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence.

Proverbs 26:<sup>20</sup> Without wood, fire goes out;  
without a gossip, conflict dies down.

<sup>21</sup> As charcoal for embers and wood for fire,  
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.

<sup>22</sup> A gossip's words are like choice food  
that goes down to one's innermost being.

<sup>23</sup> Smooth lips with an evil heart  
are like glaze on an earthen vessel.

# PRINCIPLE 4

## BELIEVERS NOT TO ASSOCIATE WITH GOSSIP / SLANDER

- Proverbs 20:19 The one who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid someone with a big mouth.
- Proverbs 10:18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.
- Proverbs 13:20 The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.
- Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.”



# PRINCIPLE 4 continued

## Why Do People Gossip?

- It is a natural disposition of the flesh (Rom. 1:28 ff.)
- Immature Christians are particularly susceptible
- Undisciplined individuals (especially sluggards) have nothing better to do and tend to talk about others to give them a feeling they don't have problems
- Gain a feeling of importance because they know something about someone else they think is important

# **PRINCIPLE 4 continued**

## **Before Opening Your Mouth Ask Yourself...**

- Why am I telling this person this information about this other person?
- Would the other person about whom I am speaking be pleased to know that I am telling you this information?
- Is this person I am talking to a part of the problem or the solution to the problem?
- How will this person's spiritual life be enhanced, and how will these words about this other person, minister grace to them?

# PRINCIPLE 5

## OUR WORDS VALIDATE THE REALITY OF WHAT IS IN OUR HEARTS

- Matthew 12

<sup>32</sup> Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.

<sup>33</sup> “Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

<sup>34</sup> Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. <sup>35</sup> A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil.

<sup>36</sup> I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. <sup>37</sup> For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

# PRINCIPLE 6

## BEFORE YOU SAY IT, ASK WILL IT EDIFY THE HEARER

- Proverbs 25:<sup>11</sup> A word spoken at the right time is like gold apples in silver settings.  
<sup>12</sup> A wise correction to a receptive ear is like a gold ring or an ornament of gold.  
<sup>13</sup> To those who send him, a trustworthy envoy is like the coolness of snow on a harvest day; he refreshes the life of his masters.
- Ephesians 4:<sup>29</sup> No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.

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- James 3: <sup>9</sup> With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.