

GROWTH GUIDE

READ & REVIEW

Today's focus is going to be on looking at the biblical text and understanding what the writer was communicating to his original audience.

Begin by reading James 3:1-12 in its entirety.

Read James 3:1-2

James begins with a warning for people not to desire to become teachers because of a stricter judgment (v. 1). He warns that it is easy for a teacher to fall into judgment because they use speech regularly (v. 2).

Why do you think some of James' audience were aspiring to become teachers? What are the dangers of people desiring to be teachers who should not?

Read James 3:3-6

James uses three illustrations to point out the power of the tongue: a bit (v. 3), a rudder (v. 4-5a), and a spark (v. 5b-6).

In picking these illustrations, what is James highlighting about the power of speech? Who in his audience is he targeting with these illustrations?

Read James 3:7-8

James points out that humans have been able to tame all kinds of creatures of the earth (v. 7). He then points out that these same humans have been unable to tame the tongue (v. 8a). Then he states that the tongue is full of deadly poison (v. 8b).

How does James highlight the uncontrollability of the tongue? How does the image of the tongue as a wild beast with a venomous bite challenge you in how you use your tongue?

Read James 3:9-12

James points out a paradox: we praise God and curse his image (people) with the same tongue (v. 9-10). He then uses an illustration of a spring and fruit trees to challenge this behavior (v. 11-12).

How do the illustrations James used challenge his readers to consider the use of their tongue? What are the implications of these illustrations to the praise they are offering God?