

# Finer Grounds

James & Jude

## Lesson 6: James 3:1-6

### Read James 3:1-8

As we begin chapter 3, James keeps on doing what he does best; stringing together his previous thoughts from earlier chapters into this section. Since we know we are to be slow to speak - managing our tongue, and swift to hear, using wisdom to guide us toward maturity (1:19), James escorts his readers to an area of seeking control as we are to strive for wholeness and perfection.

As James brings about the idea of teachers, it may seem an odd announcement that not all should be teachers, considering the Bible is full of commands to teach about the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20). However, during the times in which he wrote this letter, one wouldn't think of a teacher as we would today. Instead of a volunteer who oversees classes of all ages, a teacher would have been a held office, much like an elder or deacon. James was not intending to dishearten the Christians, but to make them view the role of teaching as something that was extremely serious in nature. The Greek reads: Stop becoming teachers many of you. There is an idea that those Christians, who were formally Jews, were trying to teach concepts that they didn't fully understand and thus having a negative eternal impact on those who were sitting at their feet.

Because of the wording structure of this sentence, we can learn that if there is going to be teaching, then someone has to be willing to deliver the lesson. In general, not everyone should attempt to accomplish this task. There is a more severe evaluation and sentence of judgment, for

those who choose to teach. One day they will not only have to give an account for their own beliefs and actions, but for what they teach and lead others to believe and do! It is a hefty responsibility. As a teacher, the teaching must be accurate, and life actions must match the teaching.

**If a teacher of God's Word carries a great responsibility, how imperative do you think it is that they spend a generous amount of time in study of their subject? What about the time they spend in prayer over the accuracy of their subject, and for the seasoning of their words?**

When given the platform of teacher, one is given great power (to speak), yet not everyone who teaches knows how to bridle his tongue or bring himself to the perfection that we are to strive for (1:4, 1:25, 1:17, 2:8, 2:22, 3:2). James understands that we are all going to stumble, and states as much in verse 2 where he includes himself in this faltering, but we are always to keep ourselves "in check" so that we can stay this course toward maturity and wholeness.

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**When we stumble (trip), how should we respond? Will we correct ourselves and get back up or will we follow through with a complete fall, which could be devastating in its finality?**

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James uses examples to solidify his point. A tiny bit in a horse's mouth and a small rudder on a large ship, with enough capacity to determine the direction of a sturdy beast or expansive ship, are the images he draws in our mind to correlate how a body member as small as the tongue can have a significant influence over the entire body. The tiny agent of the tongue can be used for both good and evil.

With a horse, the direction is purposed by the rider, but with a ship a great deal depends on the wind. However, the ship can still be brought under control, particularly by a small tool, the rudder. One must determine if they are going to use their tongue to guide in the right direction, toward perfection, or if the course is set for destruction.

**When it comes to our tongue, are we using it for good or evil?**

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**List some ways that you can better control this small tool of your body?**

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We are informed (in verse 5) that the tongue is the spark that can be blamed for starting an entire, all-consuming blaze! If not kept under restraint, it can defile the whole body. It can devour an entire body of disciples!

**Name some ways the tongue can destroy a body of Christians?**

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Once the evil tongue has ignited, it wheels through life and starts fires wherever it rolls (verse 6). The source of the tongue's fire is hell, the place reserved for the eternally condemned! It is harder to tame the tongue than the animals in which God gave man dominion over (Genesis 1:26). It is more vicious than any fierce creature, it acts as a caged beast, which possesses deadly venom (verse 8). It is a "big thing that comes in a small package". As an example, if a fire is started by the first words of gossip, it will keep rolling, and the flame will expand into a disaster!

**List some ways that the tongue can combust and cause destruction throughout life.**

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**List ways you can put out the fire.**

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