

BELIEVE

WISDOM FROM JAMES FOR THE WAR CALLED LIFE

GROUP NOTES, WEEK 4

OPENING QUESTION

What's the nicest compliment you've ever received?

SCRIPTURE

Read James 3

BIG IDEAS

Pastor James wants to talk to us about our words. Reading James 3, it becomes clear that **our words are more directional than we think, more broken than we'd like to admit, and are ripe for redemption by Jesus.**

>> *Read vv. 1-5. What metaphors does James employ to describe the tongue? How does that resonate with you?*

It's easy for us to read this passage and think of someone else we think "needs to hear this message." But let's reflect personally on what he just said. He's told us that if we raise our hands to teach the Scriptures, we've just signed up for a stricter judgement! Indeed, our words have the power to move us toward God or away – toward others or away.

>> *Have you ever gotten into trouble for saying something you shouldn't? On the other hand, have your words ever opened up new doors for you (perhaps in a job interview, etc.)?*

Yes, our words have power. But not all their power is good. While it is true that our words are more directional than we think they are, they're also far more broken than we'd like to admit.

>> *Read vv. 5-12. What are some of the metaphors that James uses to describe the brokenness of our words?*

James wants us to know that our words are corrupted by sin (v. 6), and just working harder at speaking more nicely won't work. He uses an analogy about training animals (vv 7-8), but that is not the same as

training the tongue. Why? The problem with our words is bigger than behavior modification (v 9-10) Words Require Internal Change (v11-12), because the "hellfire" that is turning our tongue into a weapon isn't external. You can't fix it with a little Pavlovian Dog Training. The hellfire is within us, and therefore the problem is much bigger than we'd like to admit.

>> *Read Matthew 12:34. How does this connect to what James says in vv. 5-12? What do your words say about what is actually inside your heart?*

Yes, our words are more directional than we think, more broken than we'd like to admit, and are ripe for redemption by Jesus. We are in need of an infusion of wisdom, but for James this wisdom is more than just sage advice. He is contrasting two "Wisdoms." First, there is a kind of wisdom from Earth / Hell.

>> *Read vv. 13-18. What are the two kinds of wisdom? What do they produce?*

If we stopped here, James wouldn't have much good news for us. "Be wise with your words," he'd say. But that's it. Yet, we know that James doesn't stop there. He knows that Wisdom became a man – Jesus came from Above. He was the only "wise one" with perfect words. He is the only one who can extinguish and exclude Hell from our hearts so that we can produce a harvest of righteousness.

PRAY

Take a moment to take account of your words (spoken, written, texted, Facebooked, Tweeted, etc.). What does God want to do with your words? How does the gospel empower you to speak differently? Pray that your words would be used to build and sow a harvest for righteousness, not unrighteousness.