



A GLC  JAMES:
BOOK STUDY
SESSION 3: FAITH THAT WORKS

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OUTLINE

- A. Faith that works is manifested in speech.**
- B. Faith that works is manifested in wisdom.**

A. Faith that works is manifested in speech.

In chapter 3 James zeros in on one area that will betray us time and time again, our **tongue**.

- If your faith is real it will show up in the way you speak.
- Jesus said it best: Matthew 12:33-37

The ability to speak is an incredible responsibility and the tongue possesses the potential for enormous good or terrifying evil. The ability to pray, the ability to praise God and the ability to preach the gospel or the ability to start a war, the ability to break a heart and the ability to ruin a reputation.

There is no area in our life that we see our faith more at work, than our speech.

- It is your tongue that doctor's want to see first and when we were children nurses would put a thermometer under your tongue to discover your true temperature.
- In many ways we could say that an examination of a person's spiritual health could start with their tongue.
- It will tell on your heart and reveal what kind of faith you really have.

In this section James shows his familiarity with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

- The subjects of our speech and our wisdom come up over and over again in the book of Proverbs.
- It is vital for us to understand right at the start, that while the Bible certainly affirms that believer's sin, it never defines a saved person as a sinner, wicked or an evildoer. (Proverbs 24:16)

JAMES: A GLC BOOK STUDY

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- Instead the Bible consistently defines believers as **righteous**.

In Proverbs alone the **saved person** is called righteous over 63 times. The truly saved person is then contrasted with the wicked or **unsaved person** over 77 times.

- The person with true saving faith is defined as righteous and the person that is lost is defined as wicked. (Proverbs 6:12, Proverbs 10:20, Proverbs 15:28, Proverbs 10:32)
- As far as God is concerned when a person is truly justified before Him their speech will change. Genuine saving faith will exert a controlling influence over our tongue.

1. Real faith works to train your speech. (James 3:1-4)

In verses 3-4 we are given two illustrations that clearly show us the huge influence that something small can have in directing things many times its size.

- a. The Bit

- b. The Rudder

2. Real faith works to tame your speech. (James 3:5-8)

3. Real faith works to transform your speech. (James 3:9-12)

In verses 11-12 we are given three illustrations that show us the hypocrisy of the person that claims to have true saving faith and yet continues to allow his tongue to be used for evil.

- a. The Fountain

- b. The Fig Tree

- c. The Ocean

B. Faith that works is manifested in wisdom.

For the next six verses our attention is turned from what a person says to what they actually do. Many people wanted to teach but some weren't even saved and those that were had areas in their lives that contradicted their message.

- It is important to point out that James does not have the Greek idea of wisdom here. That was based in theory and speculation and dominates western society today.
- To the Hebrew, wisdom was the application of divine truth to everyday life.

“Who among you is **wise** and **understanding**? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.”

JAMES 3:13

So James is asking, who among you understands the Word of God and are these principles clearly seen in your daily life?

- If you want to be a teacher of God's Word your doctrine had better be right and your life had better match your doctrine.
- You claim to be wise? Let's take a look at your life. Prove to me you have true wisdom, the kind that only comes from God.

In verse 13 James targets three areas of our lives where divine wisdom should show up.

- a. Your daily life.

- b. Your works.

- c. Your attitude.

The remaining verses of the chapter contrast the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God and asks us **which kind of wisdom do we have?** Divine wisdom is yet another evidence that our faith is real and we have truly been born from above.

“But if you have **bitter jealousy** and **selfish ambition** in your heart, do not be arrogant so lie against the truth.”

JAMES 3:14

- a. The motive behind worldly wisdom.

THE FOLLY OF HUMAN WISDOM

He tried education .	Ecclesiastes 1:16–18
He tried pleasure .	Ecclesiastes 2:1–2
He tried substance abuse .	Ecclesiastes 2:3
He tried business .	Ecclesiastes 2:4
He tried nature .	Ecclesiastes 2:5–6
He tried power .	Ecclesiastes 2:7
He tried wealth .	Ecclesiastes 2:8
He tried music .	Ecclesiastes 2:8
He tried sex .	Ecclesiastes 2:8

b. The origin of worldly wisdom.

“**This wisdom** is not that which comes down from above,
but is **earthly, natural, demonic.**”

JAMES 3:15

The wisdom of world is in opposition to the wisdom of God and certainly doesn't come from Him. So where does it come from?

i. It is earthly.

ii. It is natural.

iii. It is demonic.

c. The fruit of worldly wisdom.

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist,
there is **disorder and every evil thing.**”

JAMES 3:16

Extreme jealousy and selfish ambition always brings disorder and every evil thing will follow.

- The Greek word translated “**disorder**” refers to anarchy and political turmoil.
- The Greek word translated “**evil**” refers to something foul that has no value or use.
- These things are bad enough in the world but in the church they are an absolute disgrace.

In our final two verses James turns his attention to true wisdom, the wisdom that comes from God. This wisdom, in a true believer can be seen in three ways.

“But **the wisdom from above** is first **pure**, then **peaceable, gentle, reasonable**, full of **mercy** and **good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.**”

JAMES 3:17

1. The desire for true faith. (James 3:1-4)

2. The dependence of true faith.

THE FRUIT OF DIVINE WISDOM

Peaceable	It is peace loving but not at any cost.
Gentle	It is gentleness without weakness.
Reasonable	It is submissive but not compromising.
Merciful	It is controlled by compassion.
Good fruits	It is faithful and fruitful in good works.
Unwavering	It is single minded, decisive, committed, consistent
Without hypocrisy	It is sincere, open, honest and genuine.

3. The demonstration of true faith.

“And the **seed** whose **fruit is righteousness** is **sown in peace** by those who make peace.”

JAMES 3:18

Remind ourselves...

- A. Faith that works is resilient in trials.
- B. Faith that works is resisting temptation.
- C. Faith that works is responding to truth.
- D. Faith that works is vindicated by love.
- E. Faith that works is vindicated by works.
- F. Faith that works is manifested in speech.
- G. Faith that works is manifested in wisdom.

“**Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!**

Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed **you fail the test?**”

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Discussion Questions

1. Read Psalm 52:2-4, Proverbs 16:28, Proverbs 26:28, and Romans 3:12-14. Describe the evil of which the tongue is capable of?

In James 3:8, it says that no man can tame the tongue. How then can we begin to do so? (Please also see Romans 8:9-14)

2. Based on our study, how will you differentiate between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God? What are the implications of applying wisdom that is of the world? Please give specific examples.

In verse 17, James identifies the characteristics of true, godly wisdom. Think of an area in your life right now where you need to practice wisdom. How can you apply the principles of godly wisdom in your situation?

