

EQUIPPED

A Field Guide to the Christian Life

HEART WORK

James 3:1-6

Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way. We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth. And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong. In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

1. HEART WORK: TAME THE TONGUE

Proverbs 15:2,4

The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of a fool belches out foolishness. Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

James 3:7-12

People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

2. HEART WORK: CLEAN THE SPRING

Matthew 12:34-37

[Jesus said,] “For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”

James 3:13-16

If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

Jealousy: a greedy or prideful longing for something that belongs to another; even something intangible, such as a skill or position

Selfish Ambition: A strong drive for personal success without moral inhibitions

3. HEART WORK: ACTIVE HUMILITY

James 3:17-18

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

4. HEART WORK: HEAVENLY WISDOM

Matthew 5:5,8-9

“God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.”

“God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.”