



5. Stricter Standards for Teachers

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

Not many of us should aspire to become teachers, is how James begins Chapter 3. Why?

Because James asserts that teachers will be held to a higher standard of judgement and accountability.

Now this is not a verse you will find in a flyer used by your church to attract Church School

teachers to volunteer their time and talent. While, this verse is not the greatest one to attract a person to teach, once a person decides to become a teacher, this verse should never be forgotten. This verse and its implications hold true in any kind of school and is not limited to church schools.

While the teaching of James in Chapter 3 is universal, I will limit the reflection of the verses to the context of teachers and focus on the two big thoughts in it – a teacher's 'words' and teacher's wisdom.

Let me begin by placing the reason why teachers are held to a stricter standard of accountability. It is simple and all about influence. The impact of the words and the

wisdom of teachers is far-reaching. If James wrote today, he probably would have had a different metaphor to warn teachers of the importance of controlling their words. *"Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark."* (James 3:5) I think he would have used the metaphor of a viral video!

James uses a lot of negative and harsh words to describe our tongue saying it 'defiles the whole body' (v6) that it is 'untamable' (v7) and a restless evil full of deadly poison (v 8).

But, this does not mean that James does not recognize the value and goodness of tongues. He said when 'controlled' the words flowing from our tongues can bless and praise (v10), and can produce fresh water. This is true of many viral videos that can bless people.

So, a teacher or anyone else among us who is an influencer should control their words, so that they can bless, provide refreshing water and bear good fruit.

Let me end this part on words by quoting the powerful metaphor used by James while describing how the small tongue can have a huge impact. *"Take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body."*

Next James turns his focus on wisdom and distinguishes between 'earthly' and 'heavenly' wisdom. It is interesting to note that James focuses on the 'behavior' aspect of the traits he mentions. Teachers should not demonstrate earthly wisdom by teachers who are self-centered displaying selfish-ambition, jealousy and boastfully lie. For these teachers, students are an audience and the classroom a stage to satisfy their needs for recognition, power and to create dependency. As Jesus says in Matthew 23: 7-8, *"They love to be greeted with respect in the*

marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi or Teacher' by others. But you are not to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers."

But, teachers should use the wisdom from above which is essentially pure, peaceable, gentle and reasonable, satisfied with less than its due, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality, free from hypocrisy. Unlike the selfish teachers using earthly wisdom, the ones using

heavenly wisdom is 'spirit-filled,' and put the interest of their learners first. Teachers like you and me should gently correct and accept reasonable and bona fide mistakes.

We must be generous and satisfied with reasonable performance. It is also important for teachers to be impartial and not discriminate when teaching or encouraging students. They must be the same for all.

Teachers should be free from deceit and hypocrisy and should not try to win admiration of students by sugar coating important issues or tickling their ears by telling them only what they want to hear. Of course, while I have kept my focus on teachers, these principles hold true for leaders and anyone who exerts influence.

So, may we all use our words and wisdom with consideration and thoughtfulness so that we create forest fires and viral messages that lead to a harvest of righteousness.

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