

The tongue and the wisdom from above

James 3:1–18 · Eighteen verses · Song: “Small Spark”

The picture: One tiny flame at the bottom sets a whole forest burning; a horse in its bridle and bit on one side, a ship with its small rudder on the other.



PICTURE WORD

Fire

THE CHAPTER IN BRIEF



small spark, a whole forest on fire: that is the tongue.

Remember it: THREE pictures of the tongue: horse, ship, fire. Chapter 3 is the tongue.

MEMORY VERSE

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

James 3:17 · the author's translation

GREEK WORD

γλῶσσα

“tongue” · verse 5

In James: five times, in 2 chapters

The word means the tongue in the mouth and also a language. James gives it three pictures: a horse's bit, a ship's rudder and a small spark (3:3–6). It is a small part of the body, but it steers the whole life. No human being can tame it (3:8), so it needs the wisdom from above.

HOW THE CHAPTER MOVES

1–2 Teachers are judged more strictly; we all stumble.

3–6 The bit, the rudder and the spark: the tongue is a fire.

7–12 No one can tame the tongue: one mouth, two streams.

13–18 Two kinds of wisdom; the harvest of peace.

FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

v. 9 ← Gen 1:26–27 People made in the likeness of God.

MY NOTES



Listen. Hear James 3 sung in the **James by Heart** app, or free at ispress.de/james/songs/3.

The song: “Small Spark.” Left out of the song: 3:8 (partly), 3:9, 3:10, 3:11, 3:12. Read those verses in your Bible.

The power of the tongue

Teachers judged more strictly

One mouth, two streams

Wisdom from above

FILL IN THE BLANKS

A small _____, a whole _____ on fire: that is the _____.

CHECK YOURSELF

1. Why should not many become teachers?

- ☐ (A) Because teaching is boring ☐ (B) Because teachers will be judged more strictly
☐ (C) Because only elders may teach ☐ (D) Because the tongue is small

2. What can no one tame?

- ☐ (A) The sea ☐ (B) The horse
☐ (C) The tongue ☐ (D) The wind

3. The wisdom from above is first of all what?

- ☐ (A) Pure ☐ (B) Clever
☐ (C) Proud ☐ (D) Hidden

TALK IT OVER

1. Think of a time when a few words set a whole situation on fire. What could have stopped it?

2. “Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth.” Why is this so hard to change?

3. Read the eight marks of the wisdom from above in verse 17. Which one does your home or church need most?

IN YOUR OWN WORDS: WHAT DOES JAMES 3 TEACH?

- ☐ I listened to the song
☐ I can say 3:17 by heart

- ☐ I can say what it teaches
☐ I know the picture word

Answers Blanks: spark · forest · tongue · Check yourself: 1. B (v. 1) · 2. C (v. 8) · 3. A (v. 17)