

Curse & Complain -OR- Praise & Celebrate... Your Choice!

James 3: 1 – 12 (NIV)

Caution to teachers

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ²We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check."

Seemingly insignificant things can be the source of great power

³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or 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. ⁵Likewise 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."

The tongue is one such source of great power and potential destruction

*⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰**Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.** ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water."*

Discipline of Celebration

How is your "Joy Meter ?"

Really want to know? Compare yours to a child's.

Are you "Joy Impaired ?"

Are you becoming that old, grumpy relative?

Who are your "Joy Mentors ?"

Don't have any? That is a problem.

Matthew 21:14-16 (NIV)

"The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. ¹⁶"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?' " (Psalm 8:2)

Further reading - "Spirit of the Disciplines" by Dallas Willard.

Small Group & Personal Reflection Questions:

In James 3:3-5, numerous examples are given of small words which wield great power. In your life, can you think of any example, when you, or someone else, used words to bring destruction or encouragement?

Of the three "joy" questions (joy meter, joy impaired, etc.) which one is most challenging to you and why? What do you think God may be nudging you to do?

In Matthew 21:14-16, Jesus points out that all people have praise implanted in them simply through creation. What can you do in your life to allow your praise to bubble up out of you, rather than cursing?

Read Psalm 8. How does this Psalm tie into the idea of praise and celebration?

5. What would it mean in your life to praise and celebrate instead of curse and complain? How can you develop the discipline of celebration?