

St James Epistle and the main themes

Activity

Refer to the attached handout giving an overview of the Epistle of St James, and the aims and outcomes of the Lesson.

After giving an overview of the epistle background and main themes using the provided power point presentation, you may wish to focus in a group discussion (Or Debate) on specific practical messages that St James is conveying in each of his passages using the provided video clips.

A. Read James 3:1-12 (Taming the tongue)

I. The importance of the tongue

It is a true expression of what is inside man: “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

No one can control it. It is evil and uncontrollable, full of deadly poison.

We use it to give thanks to our Lord and Father, and also to curse our fellow men, created in the likeness of God.

On the Day of Judgment, men will render account for every careless word they utter.

The measure you give will be the measure you get.

Family troubles and disputes among tribes in rural societies, and international wars, all result from formal declaration of the people in office. (Give examples from the Holy Bible and from the life history of the Saints).

The “Tongue” in the 21st century represents also the various social media outlets (texting, Twitting, Facebook, emails, etc.) Once a message is said/sent, it can go viral and you do not have any control on it anymore, it will potentially be easier to spread and more susceptible to different interpretations.

Video clip (Introducing the topic)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHj78E25fkc>

Lesson Outline:

I. Examples of the sins of the tongue

The sin of judging others.

The sin of cursing, insulting people and the impolite words.

The sin of despising others and bad jokes.

The sin of talkativeness and empty words, which are not for building.

The sin of tale bearing calumny, slander, backbiting and envy.

The sin of hypocrisy, simulation, insincerity, partiality and false praise.

II. How can we cure the sins of the tongue

Repentance and seeking grace - renewal. Everything has become new. Out of it comes fresh water, not salty water.

Growth in grace through prayers and studying the Bible and practicing of Sacraments. We change our shape through renewing our mind.

Circumspection in conduct and in talk and keeping away from rashness and asking for the help of God when we talk.

Being fully convinced that the sins of the tongue are dangerous and by examining oneself one can keep away from such sins.

Confess these sins to your father of confession and study them with him so that he may help you overcome them

Do not imitate the children of the world but be distinguished from them, as you are the children of God.

B. Read James 2:14-26 (Faith vs Deeds)

Faith distinguished through good deeds 2:14-26

- a) The dead faith is not enough for salvation 2:14
- b) Two examples of dead faith 2:15-18
- c) The believe of demons 2:19
- d) Two examples of true faith (Abraham & Rahab) 2:20-24
- e) Faith and works are like spirit and body 2:25

- ❖ The believers are justified by Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their Faith is justified by works. Both St. Paul and St. James used Abraham as an example. St Paul see him justified by faith when he accepted the word of God and believed it (Rom. 4:1-25) before he received the covenant of circumcision or the law. St James see his faith justified when he obeyed the Lord and offered his son sacrifice to the Lord.(James 2:14-26)
- ❖ The first step in accepting Christ is FAITH and this is “the condition” to be baptized and join the “Body of Christ” (Acts 2:38 ; 8:36-37)
- ❖ The believer who accepted Christ in faith and lived in the grace of our Lord have to practice the obedience of the commandments . He is confronted with the traces of the “old man” inside himself , the desires of the world and the traps of the devils . So, he have to struggle till the blood against sin to live victorious as his Master (Heb. 12:1-2 , 4).
- ❖ The believer also have to struggle - through the grace of the Lord - to grow up in the knowledge of our Lord (2 Pet.3:18), in goodness , in righteousness , in love and in the

fullness of the Holy Spirit which will beautifying him with His fruits and gifts.(Eph. 3:16-19 ; 5:18 ; Gal.5:22-23)

- ❖ In the last day there will be two gates to go through to reach heaven
 1. faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour and the Father who send Him (John 5:24).
 2. doing good deeds (John 5:29 , Mat. 25:31-46)

- ❖ There are differences between the works of the law which St. Paul attacked in his epistles , and the works which are needed as the results of faith .

The works of the Law	The works of faith
1. The person do them with his own power and abilities	1.The Lord is working within us through His Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13)
2 The person will be justified by them (Ezek. 20:11 ; Rom. 10:5 ; Gal.3:12)	2. We working with Him (1 Cor. 3:9)
3. No one was able to fulfill the commandments of the law and justified (Rom. 3: 9 -12 , 20)	3. We are created in Jesus Christ for good works (Eph. 2:10)
	4. These good works are signs of our faith (Acts 26:20 ; Tit. 2:7 ; Heb.10:24 ; James 2:17-26 ; 1John 3:10 , 18)

Video clip (Introducing/debating the topic)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNY7PaWDqMc>