

## 07. The Epistle of James—3:3-12

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(1/4/17)

With the holidays and other things going on it's been three weeks since our last study in the book of James.

As we said when we started this study—James is calling his readers (primarily Jewish Christians—but all Christians) to maturity and commitment.

In the first two chapters, he has presented us with some of the characteristics of a mature Christian—

- 1. A mature Christian embraces trials and is on guard against temptation. (chapter 1)*
- 2. A mature Christian demonstrates a heart of love and concern for the poor and disadvantaged and reaches out to help them. (chapter 2)*

Now in chapter three, he shares another important characteristic of a mature Christian—a mature, Spirit-filled Christian has power over their tongue.

**James 3:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

A teacher of God's Word is really a spokesman for God—and that carries with it a great responsibility.

The **‘judgment’** that James is referring to in v.1 has a two-fold application.

For false teachers (like the scribes and Pharisees as well as those in the church today), the future tense (**will incur**) refers to the Great White Throne judgment spoken of by John in Revelation 20:11–15.

And for Christians who teach false doctrine—not misinterpretations of passages on non-essential issues—I’m talking about passages that are clear like those regarding homosexuality.

Those pastors/teachers/professors who capitulate to the culture and teach that homosexuality, gay marriage and abortion are not wrong.

They will incur ‘judgment’ in the form of chastening in this life and at the bema seat of Christ in the form of lost rewards when they (and all of us) will give an account to God (Rom.14:12; Heb.4:13).

**James 3:2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.**

The tongue can and has done a lot of damage in other people’s lives—but as Jesus told us the real problem is in the heart—*“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”* (Matt.12:34)

So when James says that a mature Christian has learned to control their tongue (“not stumble in word”)—the implication is that they are keeping their heart pure by walking in the Spirit and filling their minds with the Word of God continually.

**“we all stumble in many things”**—or as we would say today, *“we’ve all blown it in many ways—none of us is perfect in our walk”*.

However, he continues— **“If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body”**.

The Greek word translated **‘perfect’** (teleios) can either mean *‘absolutely perfect’* (sinless) or *‘complete/mature’* depending on the context.

I think it’s pretty clear that James has in mind Christian maturity when he says that, *“Even though none of us is perfect (sinless)—anyone who has learned to control their tongue is definitely a mature Christian.”*

And not only that but he goes on to say—a person like that, if they can control their tongue—they can control every other area of their life because the tongue is the toughest opponent we face in our Christian life.

In order to impress on us the importance of controlling what comes out of our mouths—James gave us six illustrations of the tongue: a bit, a rudder, fire, a poisonous animal, a fountain, and a fig tree.

All six work together to paint a picture in our minds of the benefits of using our tongue wisely—and the devastation that results when we use it haphazardly or carelessly.

**James 3:3-4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. <sup>4</sup> Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.**

When James talks about the tongue being like a bit and a rudder—he is speaker of the power of the tongue to direct.

A bit and rudder are relatively small in comparison to what they are able to direct.

A small bit in the mouth of horse, which is a large and powerful animal, can be used very effectively by the rider to direct it to the right or to the left by simply pulling on the reins.

Also by comparison, a rudder is relatively small but allows the pilot to steer a huge ship by simply turning the rudder one way or the other.

James' point is that the tongue, although a small member of our body, has the power to change the course of a life.

In fact, the tongue is so powerful that Proverbs 18:21 says that *'death and life are in the power of the tongue'*.

And that's why the psalmist prayed—*"Take control of what I say, O LORD, and guard my lips."* (Ps.141:3)

Another author said,

*"This means that both the bit and the rudder must be under the control of a strong hand. The expert horseman keeps the mighty power of his steed under control, and the experienced pilot courageously steers the ship through the storm. When Jesus Christ controls the tongue, then we need not fear saying the wrong things—or even saying the right things in a wrong way!"*

The only way to control the human tongue is by the power of another tongue—

**Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...(Comment)

But getting back to what James says—the tongue has the power to change the direction of a person's life for good or for evil.

Those young men that are going to mosques and listening to radical imams preach hate and violence against non-Muslims are being subjected to the power of the spoken word to direct their lives into evil.

Warren Wiersbe talks about the power of the spoken word to direct a person's life to God and to a life of good—

*“On April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball went into a Boston shoe store and led young Dwight L. Moody to Christ. The result: one of history's greatest evangelists, a man whose ministry still continues...Yes, the tongue is like a bit and a rudder: it has the power to direct. How important it is that our tongues direct people in the right way!”*

But, not only does the tongue have the power to *direct* a life—it also has the power to *destroy* a life—

**James 3:5-8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**

In these verses, James goes on to liken the tongue to a fire and a poisonous animal—both of which have the power to destroy.

He says that it only takes a small fire (like a small match today) to set a whole forest on fire and cause great destruction.

Even so, the tongue is a small member of our body—but it is hell's ‘match’ used effectively to damage and destroy many lives.

I remember reading the biography of D. L. Moody and how that on the night of October 8, 1871 he was preaching in Chicago.

He presented the gospel to his audience and told them to think about it and to come back the next week if they wanted to receive Christ as their Savior.

As the meeting was being dismissed at around 8:30 that night the bells from fire trucks were already sounding—that was the night of the great Chicago fire.

The fire was reportedly started in the barn of Mrs. O’Leary when her cow apparently kicked over a kerosene lantern.

That little lantern started a fire that destroyed 17,500 building, left over 125,000 homeless, took the lives of 300 people, and cost the city over \$400 million dollars—Moody said it reminded him of hell.

But even that can’t compare to the destruction that has been caused by the human tongue over the centuries—the lives damaged, reputations ruined and even physical death and suffering.

**Proverbs 16:27 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> An ungodly man digs up evil, And *it is* on his lips like a burning fire.

As we said last time—For every word in Hitler’s book Mein Kampf, 125 people died in World War II.

I just read yesterday that Mein Kampf is the most popular book in Germany once again—God help us!

Someone has warned that, “*Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.*”

The devastating thing about a fire is that as long as it has fuel and oxygen it will continue to spread and destroy—and the same thing is true with the fuel the tongue provides with regard to gossip.

**Proverbs 26:20-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out; And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.

<sup>21</sup> As charcoal *is* to burning coals, and wood to fire, So *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

One author satirically noted,

*“I am more deadly than the screaming shell from the howitzer. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, and wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea, and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name is Gossip.”*

**James 3:6 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> **And 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.**

Not only is the tongue like a fire—but it is also like a dangerous animal.

**James 3:7-8 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> **For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**

It’s amazing to see what animals can be trained to do.

I watched a program that showed how animal trainers taught dogs and other animals for the movies—amazing what they were able to teach them.

I've seen snake charmers in India control deadly cobras.

Years ago, my family and I went to Sea World in San Diego and watched whales and dolphins perform amazing things on command by trainers.

In the circus, animals like lions and elephants are trained to do incredible things.

I read how a lion tamer said that he raises lions from cubs to use in his performances.

He said he'd never get into a cage with a full-grown lion that he hadn't raised—they're too unpredictable and dangerous.

Even so, the best time to start taming the tongue is by parents when their children are young.

Look, as parents we should do what we can to teach our children to control what comes out of their mouths—but James said in verse 8 that ultimately no one can completely tame the destructive power of the tongue—no one that is but the Holy Spirit.

And it must be tamed because, as James tells us—“**the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.**” (v.8)

One author—

*“The poison of the tongue is no less deadly [than a serpent's venom], it murders men's reputations by the slanders it utters, their souls by the lusts and passions it stirs up in them, and many times their bodies too by the contentions and quarrels it raises against men.”*

The word ‘**unruly**’ in v.8 (“the tongue is an *unruly* evil”) is the same Greek word translated “**unstable**” in 1:8.

It carries the idea of a wild animal fighting fiercely to break out of captivity—as is the case with the tongue.

It constantly wants to break out of its ‘cage’ (our mouth and teeth) to spread its deadly poison.

As one pastor noted—

*“Its ‘venom’ is more deadly than a snake’s because it can destroy morally, socially, economically, and spiritually.”*

All it takes is for one person to inject some poisonous gossip into a conversation for entire families and churches to be damaged or destroyed.

**James 3:8-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> **With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.** <sup>10</sup> **Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.**

Of course, the point James is making is that a redeemed heart should produce a redeemed tongue.

Unfortunately, often the last part of a Christian’s body to be redeemed *is* their tongue.

And so, you have Christians who come to church and sing praises to God—but then leave and curse other Christians, use profanity and tell dirty jokes at work.

Notice that James isn’t saying a person who uses profanity or curses another can’t really be a Christian—he simply says **“these things ought not to be so.” (v.10)**

His point isn't to prove the *validity* of his reader's salvation—but the *maturity* of their salvation.

A true Christian *can* and *often does* use their tongues to tear down, curse and rip apart others—but it shouldn't be allowed.

When a person is saved they have the Holy Spirit within them and He is like the pure, fresh, life giving water of a spring—

**James 3:11-12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>11</sup> Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.**

Even though it's possible for a true Christian to curse and spread gossip—it could indicate that a person isn't really a child of God if a constant flow of sewage keeps coming out of their mouth—

**James 1:26 (NKJV)**

**<sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.**

At very least, what comes out of the mouth demonstrates what's in the heart—for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Warren Wiesbe—

*“The tongue that blesses the Father, and then turns around and curses men made in God's image, is in desperate need of spiritual medicine! How easy it is to sing the hymns during the worship service, then after the service, get into the family car and argue and fight all the way home! “My brethren, these things ought not to be.”*

*The problem, of course, is not the tongue; it is the heart... “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man” (Matt. 15:18). “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). As we fill our hearts with God's Word, and yield to the Holy Spirit, He can use us to bring delight to others, and we will be refreshing fountains and trees.”*

**Proverbs 18:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> The words of a man's mouth *are* deep waters; The wellspring of wisdom *is* a flowing brook.

**Proverbs 10:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> The mouth of the righteous *is* a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

**Proverbs 13:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, To turn *one* away from the snares of death.

Wiersbe concludes this section in his commentary on James by suggesting Christians start using the “*Twelve Words That Can Transform Your Life.*” He said—

“If you use these words *and sincerely mean what you say from your heart*, you will find that God will use you to be a blessing and encouragement to others. There are only twelve of them, but they work.

“***Please***” and “***Thank you.***” When you use these three words, you are treating others like people and not things. You are showing appreciation.

“***I’m sorry.***” These two words have a way of breaking down walls and building bridges.

“***I love you.***” Too many people read “romance” into these words, but they go much deeper than that. As Christians, we should love the brethren and even love our enemies. “I love you” is a statement that can carry tremendous power.

“***I’m praying for you.***” And be sure that you are. When you talk to God about people, then you can talk to people about God. Our private praying for people helps us in our public meeting with people. Of course, we never say “I’m praying for you” in a boastful way, as though we are more spiritual than others. We say it in an encouraging way, to let others know that we care enough for them to meet them at the throne of grace.

Years ago I came across an amazing article entitled, “*How to Guard Against the Defilement of Listening to an Evil Report*”.

This is an article that every Christian should read and consider—I’ve attached it to the end of my notes for this study (07. James 3:3-12)

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## **How to Guard Against the Defilement of Listening to an Evil Report**

- What causes conflicts in families, churches or organizations to flare out of control and split the entire group?
- What causes close friendships to be broken when neither party offended the other?
- Why are attempts to restore a fallen Christian brother or sister often met with defeat?

### **A MAJOR CAUSE: WRONG RESPONSES TO AN EVIL REPORT**

#### **DEFINITION:**

An evil report involves distortion of facts, incomplete facts or false information. It is given with wrong motivations and causes the hearer to come to inaccurate conclusions and to respond with unscriptural “solutions”. Evil reports are so destructive that they can even destroy long-lasting, close friendships: Proverbs 16:28 <sup>28</sup> A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

#### **NOTE:**

Wrong doing should never be covered over. It must be brought to the attention of those who are responsible and dealt with in a scriptural manner. This necessary process will be damaged by the defilement of an evil report.

#### **STAGES OF DEFILEMENT:**

In the medical world, there are stages in the development of a disease. In the same way, there are stages of destruction to a spiritually healthy person:

- Ignorance of “preventive” measures to avoid contamination
- Exposure to one who is already “infected”
- Contamination (defilement) by allowing their “germs” to enter our systems
- Disease when the infection destroys vital life-supporting functions

### **WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF DEFILEMENT?**

#### **IGNORANCE**

2 Corinthians 2:11 “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.”

Ignorance is not being aware of the destructive power of untrue or distorted words.

James 3:6 (NKJV) “And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”

**Ignorance of how words destroy close friendships:**

Proverbs 17:9 He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

**Ignorance of how the unclean defile the clean, rather than the clean influencing the unclean.**

See Haggai 2:11-14

**Ignorance of what constitutes an evil report:**

It is an unauthorized or distorted or false report which influences us to form an evil opinion about another person.

**Ignorance of how evil reports are given:**

Evil reports are communicated by words, facial expressions, gestures and tonal patterns. They can be subtle or obvious, quiet or angry, sweet or bitter.

**Ignorance of who gives evil reports:**

Giving bad reports is part of the fallen nature of every person.

Whisperer: One who secretly or privately passes on evil reports to others Psalms 41:7 “All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt.”

Gossip: One who magnifies and sensationalizes rumors and partial information.

Slander: One who seeks to destroy another’s credibility or reputation with damaging facts, distortion of facts, or evil suspicions. [See numbers 14:36]

Busybody: One who digs up evil reports and makes it his business to spread them by means of gossip, sander, or whispering. Such an action is as great a as murder or stealing. It is classified with these by God when He warns: 1 Peter 4:15 <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.”

**Ignorance of what motivates evil reports [See James 3:14-18]**

- Bitterness: Reacting because of personal hurts
- Rebellion: Justifying an independent spirit
- Deception: Believing that evil reports are right to give

- Pride: Wanting to exalt self
- Guilt: Justifying past actions or attitudes
- Envy: Desiring what another has

**Ignorance of how susceptible we are to evil reports:**

- We enjoy hearing them because they exalt us. They bring down or hurt those whom we dislike.

**Ignorance of how satan uses evil reports:**

- To discredit spiritual leadership
- To cause Christians to close their spirit toward each other
- To multiply conflicts and produce more ungodliness
- To prompt non-Christians to mock Christianity and reject Christ

**EXPOSURE**

Proverbs 27:12 “A prudent *man* foresees evil *and* hides himself; The simple pass on *and* are punished.”

Exposure is entering into conversation with a person who is a carrier of an evil report

**How does God want us to respond?**

Psalms 101:5

<sup>5</sup>Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure.

Ephesians 5:10-12

<sup>10</sup>finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.<sup>11</sup> And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.<sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

Romans 16:17

<sup>17</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

We have protective physical defenses to warn us about physical contamination. We can smell it or see it or taste it. Sometimes, however, we are unaware of contamination until it is too late.

In the same way God gives us protective spiritual defenses to warn us about spiritual contamination. We can sense the promptings of God’s Holy Spirit follow the warnings of God’s Word and obey the wise counsel of our human authorities. Sometimes, however, we are unaware of spiritual danger until it is too late.

## HOW TO DETECT A CARRIER OF AN EVIL REPORT:

- A carrier will usually test your spirit before giving you the evil report. Any evidence of a compatible spirit in you will encourage him to give you the report.
- A carrier will usually check your acceptance of his report before giving it to you. He may do this by asking for your opinion about the person or dropping a negative comment and observing your response to it.
- A carrier will often get you to ask for the evil report by creating curiosity for it. Some starters are: “Have you heard about [the person]?” “Wait till I tell you about [the person]!”
- A carrier may communicate an evil report by asking us for counsel or by sharing a concern for the person involved.
- A carrier may use evil reports to get you to admire him or her because of being on the inside and having access to privileged information.
- A carrier is usually one who evokes vivid details of evil and will even search them out. God condemns such “detectives of darkness” whose tongues are like sharp swords.”

## HOW TO DETECT AN EVIL REPORT:

### Five questions to ask before listening to a carrier:

- *What is your reason for telling me?*  
Widening the circle of gossip only compounds the problem.
- *Where did you get your information?*  
Refusal to identify the source of information is a sure signal of an evil report.
- *Have you gone to those directly involved?*  
Spirituality is not measured by how well we expose an offender, but by how effectively we restore an offender.

*“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)*

- *Have you personally checked out all the facts?*  
Even “Facts” become distorted when not balanced with other facts or when given with negative motives.
- *Can I quote you if I check this out?*  
Those who give evil reports often claim that they are “misquoted.” This is because their words and overriding impressions are reported.

## DEFILEMENT

**Proverbs 26:22** “The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body.

Defilement is receiving an evil report from another person and believing that it is true.

In the same way that touching a diseased person will defile one’s hands, listening to an evil report will defile one’s mind. It is reality, which must be properly dealt with; Hebrews 12:15 “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;”

A classic illustration of many listening to an evil report: Absalom used an innocent sounding evil report to steal the hearts of almost an entire nation and lead it in revolt against his own father, King David. The report emphasized his “concern” for suffering people, his “deep desire” that justice be done and his “ability” to be a better administrator than his father. Actually, Absalom was bitter because his father did not bring judgment to Absalom’s half brother for immorality, so he took matters into his own hands and was rejected for it. [See II Samuel 15.]

**2 Samuel 15:1-7** <sup>1</sup> After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. <sup>2</sup> Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant *is* from such and such a tribe of Israel." <sup>3</sup> Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you." <sup>4</sup> Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." <sup>5</sup> And *so* it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. <sup>6</sup> In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel. <sup>7</sup> Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD.

- He gathered and organized a group that would be loyal to him, rather than to the one whom he served
- He was energetic and disciplined
- He made himself available to people
- He sought out those who had grievances
- He had a personal interest in people
- He took up the offenses of those who had been hurt
- He alienated people from their authority by giving an evil report about his leadership

**2 Samuel 15:8-10** <sup>8</sup> "For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. " <sup>9</sup> And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. <sup>10</sup> Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!' "

- He offered to be the representative to make sure things were done right
- He would use his new position to increase his loyal following
- He desired acceptance and recognition as well as authority
- He carried out a tragic takeover of the nation with the help of those who were defiled and infected with an evil report.

## INFECTION

**Proverbs 14:15** “The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps. “

**Proverbs 26:21** “As charcoal *is* to burning coals, and wood to fire, So *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.”

Infection is responding to an evil report with human reasonings and emotions rather than with spiritual understanding and genuine love.

**Proverbs 17:4** “An evildoer gives heed to false lips; A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.”

If the defilement of an evil report is not cleansed, wrong attitudes, opinions, conclusions and actions will follow – even toward very close friends;

**Proverbs 16:28** “A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.”

## SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION

- Believing the evil report is true
- Forming negative opinions based on the report
- Focusing on negative aspects of the person involved
- Interpreting the person’s words and actions as “Supporting evidence”
- Judging motives on the basis of the evil report
- Backing away from the person in your spirit
- Telling the evil report to others

## DISEASE

**Proverbs 17:4** “An evildoer gives heed to false lips; A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.”

Disease is being mentally and emotionally controlled by the evil report and by the destructive spirit of the one who gave it to us.

**Proverbs 26:24-25** “He who hates, disguises *it* with his lips, And lays up deceit within himself; <sup>25</sup> When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, For *there are* seven abominations in his ear”;

**Leviticus 19:16** “You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD.”

A diseased Christian has grieved and quenched the Holy Spirit by taking up the offenses of others, making them his own, and adding to them.

## SYMPTONS OF DISEASE

- Developing bitterness and/or rebellion, even though the person involved did not directly offend us.
- Setting ourselves up as the judge in matters which are God’s responsibility and recruiting others to “our side”.
- Searching out evil reports and using them to give the worst possible impression: Proverbs 16:27 “An ungodly man digs up evil, And *it is* on his lips like a burning fire.”
- Believing that such actions are actually accomplishing God’s will rather than realizing that we give non-Christians occasion to blaspheme God’s name because of our lack of genuine love: 1 Corinthians 6:5-8 <sup>4</sup> say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! <sup>7</sup> Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? <sup>8</sup> No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things *to your* brethren!”

Often we do not act on information when we should do so because the defilement or infection hinders God’s grace in us [See Hebrew 12:15]

## HOW TO CLEANSE OUR MIND FROM AN EVIL REPORT:

Attempts to restore a Christian who has been overtaken in a fault will usually fail, unless the defilement of listening to evil reports is first cleansed and then replaced with the spirit of Christ’s love, humility and forgiveness.

- Ask God to cleanse your mind from the defilement of an evil report
- Pray for God to give you genuine love for each one involved
- Cleanse your mind with appropriate scripture:

Have I accepted the evil report as true?

**Proverbs 14:15** <sup>4</sup> “The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps.

**Psalms 19:13** “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Presumptuousness is: to take for granted and assume to be true in the absence of proof to the contrary.

Has the evil report affected how I feel toward the person involved?

**Proverbs 15:4** "A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit."

**Romans 2:1** “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”

**1 Peter 4:8** <sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

**1 Corinthians 13:5-6** “ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;”

Do I have an urge to tell someone else the evil report?

**Ephesians 4:29** “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

**Proverbs 11:13** “A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.”

**Proverbs 17:9** “He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.”

You know when you have cleansed your heart:

- When you lose your urge to tell someone else the evil report
- When you grieve over the fact that a report was given
- When you have a genuine love toward the person involved in the report
- When you are prompt to examine your own life for failures

Act on what you heard. Is God directing you? :

- Is God directing you to contact the one who gave you the evil report?  
To ask the five questions which identify an evil report; see page 3.  
  
To emphasize the importance of speaking the truth in love [See John 17:20-26; Philippians 2:1-4]

- Is God directing you to contact the person involved in the situation?  
Is God directing you to contact the person involved in the evil report in order to check out the facts and help restore in the spirit of meekness? [See Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1]
  
- Is God directing you to contact those who are spiritually responsible for the situation?  
Once they are informed the responsibility is with them.