

Scripture Reading: James 2:1-10, (11-13), 14-17

Love your neighbor as yourself, but don't take down the fence. —Carl Sandburg

n verse 8 of today's reading in James, we read: "You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

No one likes bad neighbors. One person complained on an internet site: "My neighbors have three dogs. Chihuahuas. Yippy little things. I'm trying to sleep and all I can hear is YIP, YIP, YIP, YIP, YIP, YIP, YIP, YIP."

Another person wrote: "My neighbor is lovely in nearly every way. He's friendly, has a cute dog and he brought us fish and chips for lunch on the day we moved in. He watches our house when we're away, and deals with repair people if we're at work, since he's retired. Practically perfect in every way. But, his garden is full of wind chimes. Like, there could well be more than 100. The constant chiming 24/7 makes me crazy. I hear them in my sleep. I hear them at work. I swear they're following me. The chimes never stop."

One more example: "My current neighbors are loud and they smoke like chimneys. They have a medium-sized dog that lives outside. He's called Rocket, and he's so bored that he barks a lot at small things. Open the back door on their side of the house? He's off. He won't stop barking for 15 minutes to an hour. That barking ruins me. They go out shopping on the week-end, and he starts barking. Not irregular 'I'm excited' barks; those I can filter out in my head. These are 'I have nothing better to do' barks, one every second with a monotonous regularity that does my head in. They constantly leave the poor mutt outside in the cold and he sits and whines all the way into the night until he falls asleep."

Perhaps you, like me, are amazed that people can be so thoughtless of others around them. That's why I try to be conscious of how my words and actions affect my neighbors.

Would I want to live next door to a person like me?

What about you? Would you live next door to yourself?

Because the question the apostle James really poses in today's reading is not, "What do you think of your neighbors?" but "What do your neighbors think of you?" -Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, a good neighbor is a loving and helping person. Let me love my neighbor always and help whenever and however I can. Amen.

Week of September 5, 2021



Daily Bible Readings Sunday: Acts 15:1–18:11 Monday: 1 Chronicles 20-23 Tuesday: 1 Chronicles 24-26 Wednesday: 1 Chronicles 27-29 Thursday: 2 Chronicles 1-3 Friday: 2 Chronicles 4-6 Saturday: Psalms 97-99

Bible Cryptogram

Try to fill in the answer key (alphabet row) with numbers. We have given you one vowel and one consonant. For example, everywhere you see the number 1, you know it is an O and can fill in the squares above all number 1 boxes with an O. Hint: Look for two and three letter words. These common words are a good place to start.

Α	В	С	D	Ε	F	G	Η	Ι	J	К	L	Μ	Ν	0	Ρ	Q	R	S	Т	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
														1				22							



Verse to Remember O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things. —Psalm 98:1

S	М	Т	W	Т	F	S
				2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	14 21 28	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



Scripture Reading: James 3:1-12

It's better to bite your tongue than eat your words! —Anon.

In verse 8 of today's reading, the apostle James makes a provocative assertion: "No one can tame the tongue — a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

Do you think this sainted apostle is exaggerating just a little? "No one can tame the tongue." Really? *No one*?

Surely, *someone* in the long history of the human race has been able to control the words that come out of the mouth. Perhaps that someone is *you*.

- Don't you use your words to bless people rather than curse them?
- Don't you offer sweet-smelling words that purify the air around you?
- Don't you use your words to lift others up rather than to tear them down?

Doctors tell us that there are many diseases associated with the tongue. These include discoloration, soreness, pain, redness and swelling. There are diseases of the mouth and tongue called leukoplakia, oral candidiasis, keratosis pharynges, glossitis, hypoglossia and of course halitosis — bad breath.

But James isn't talking about spiritual halitosis. Instead, he's peeved about those people, even Christian teachers (see verse 1), who use their mouths and tongue in a destructive way — "a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

I am sure you know that in today's world there's more talking, jabbering, caterwauling, name-calling, shouting and jeering than ever before in the history of humankind.

You can recall the days long ago when you could express your opinion to those beyond your neighborhood *only* by writing a letter to the editor, by getting on the black Bell rotary telephone to call Uncle Henry and Aunt Eunice who lived three states away or by stepping inside the voting booth every two years. Perhaps, in some ways, it was a more quiet way of life when we didn't know everyone's opinion.

Words that are negative, doubtful, vengeful and profane do not bless others. They slowly wear on us, filling our air with sadness and gloom, like dust settles on furniture.

Let's keep on blessing people! Let's use our mouths and words to encourage others! Let's start today! -Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I forget how powerful my words are. This week, may I use my words to encourage others and to calm troubled spirits. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Week of September 12, 2021

Daily Bible Readings Sunday: 1 Thessalonians 1-5 Monday: 2 Chronicles 7-9 Tuesday: 2 Chronicles 10-13 Wednesday: 2 Chronicles 14-16 Thursday: 2 Chronicles 17-19 Friday: 2 Chronicles 20-22 Saturday: Psalms 100-102

JUMBLE!

Directions: Each of the six scrambled words has a connection with each other. That connection is revealed in the two-word solution below that must be unscrambled using the letters in the shaded boxes.





Scripture Reading: Mark 9:30-37

Be the reason someone smiles today. —Anon.

We're going to play an imagination game. Imagine that I'm holding a \$100 bill. You can see it plainly. It has Benjamin Franklin's likeness on it. So, if I offered you this \$100, would you take it? You might think I'm kidding, or that there's some sort of trick I am playing on you.

But no, I'm not playing a trick and so you take it. You are now richer by a hundred dollars than you were moments ago.

Now imagine something else. Imagine that I crumple up that nice \$100 bill and crush it into a little wad. Would you still want it? Sure, you would.

Okay, imagine that I am now throwing the wadded bill to the ground and stomping on it with my foot. Would you still take the \$100 even when it's been beaten and bruised, crushed and crumbled, abased and abused. Would you still take it?

Yes, indeed! Of course you would!

Why? Because no matter how wrinkled and bent, that \$100 bill is still worth one hundred dollars.

Do you see where I'm going with this?

You and I are that \$100 bill. Doesn't matter how weak and wrinkled or how worn and torn we are. In the sight of God, and to those who love us, we're worth just as much as ever! In fact, we have immeasurable, infinite value. So, do not despair!

The apostle Paul once wrote about his rough times: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). He had been knocked down, but not knocked out. He was convinced that nothing could separate him from the love of Christ (see Romans 8:38-39).

Let us be grateful that our value as human beings does not rest upon our achievements or our looks or our health or our education. It rests instead upon the fact that we're made in the image of God.

You are made in God's image.

You are of infinite worth to God and those who love you.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Dear God, it is thrilling to consider that I am made in your image; that there is something of the divine likeness in me. May I live today in a way that honors that image. Amen.

Week of September 19, 2021



Daily Bible Readings Sunday: 2 Thessalonians 1-3 Monday: 2 Chronicles 23-25 Tuesday: 2 Chronicles 26-29 Wednesday: 2 Chronicles 30-32 Thursday: 2 Chronicles 33-36 Friday: Ezekiel 1-3 Saturday: Psalm 103-105

WORD JUMBLE

Directions: Cross out the answer to each definition. Write the remaining words on the lines below to discover this well-known saying of Jesus. One clue is not used.

1. Expression of remorse	Α	Ρ	0	L	0	G	Υ	Т	Η	Ε
2. Terror	L	Ι	F	Ε	Н	0	R	R	0	R
3. Warrior	Α	Ν	D	S	0	L	D	Ι	Ε	R
4. Article of clothing	G	Α	R	Μ	Ε	Ν	Т	Т	Η	Ε
5. Equine	Ν	0	0	Ν	Ε	Н	0	R	S	Ε
6. Holds water	W	Α	Υ	С	Ι	S	Т	Ε	R	Ν
7. Australian animal	Κ	Α	Ν	G	Α	R	0	0	Μ	Ε
8. To decide	Ι	D	Ε	Т	Ε	R	Μ	Ι	Ν	Ε
9. Document of an arrest	W	Α	R	R	Α	Ν	Т	W	Α	Υ
10. Music genre	Ε	Χ	С	Ε	Ρ	Т	J	Α	Ζ	Ζ
11. Computer screen	Μ	0	Ν	Ι	Т	0	R	Α	Ν	D
12. Sarcasm	С	0	Μ	Ε	S	Ι	R	0	Ν	Υ
13. Disciple	Α	Ρ	0	S	Т	L	Ε	Т	Н	Ε
14. Domestic pet	Т	Н	R	0	U	G	Н	С	Α	Т
15. Not true	F	Α	L	S	Ε	Т	R	U	Т	Н
16. Abode	Т	0	Т	Н	Ε	Н	0	U	S	Ε
17. Used to tie things	F	Α	Т	Н	Ε	R	R	0	Ρ	Ε
18. Used to open a door	D	0	0	R	K	Ν	0	В	A	Μ
8 18 1 9	·	_ 3		4.		15	•			







Scripture Reading: Psalm 124

No matter what side of an argument you're on, you always find some people on your side that wish you were on the other side. —Jascha Heifetz



Verses 1 and 3 of today's Psalm reading say: "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side ... then they would have swallowed us up alive."

To say that God is on our side is controversial. Yet, many people feel that there have been times when they thought they were going to be "swallowed up alive."

One problem with the conversation about whether we can say — or *should* say — that "God is on our side" is the athletes who reference God in their post-victory interviews. The media doesn't understand that when an athlete praises Jesus after the victory, he or she is not *necessarily* saying that God was on their side. They are rather simply expressing *gratitude* for this moment of joy.

Another problem with the idea of God choosing sides is what some people call "civil religion." Americans, social scientists argue, for too long have felt that the United States enjoys favored nation status in the eyes of God. This is a good point: God is not necessarily on the side of the United States.

But, we can say with authority that God *does* take sides, can we not? In the Bible, *God takes sides all the time*. For example, God is against the wicked. God is against evil. God is on the side of those who have no one who will take sides for them. God is on the side of the unsupported, the friendless, the homeless, the orphan and the widow. God is on *their* side. And to the extent that we make the lives of these people miserable and difficult, God is *not* on our side. God is against us.

Still, we can safely say there's good news: *God is on our side!* Re-read the first verse of this psalm. "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side ..." The phrase is repeated in verse 2. So the Lord *does* take sides! Often, we hear the expression, "It's not a question of whether the Lord is on *our* side; it's a question of whether we are on the *Lord's side*." Yet, verses 1 and 2 seem to suggest that it's okay to say that it is the Lord "who was on our side." That's pretty good news!

What do we need to do now?

We need to live in a way that there will never be a reason for God to *not* be on our side, advocating for us, delivering us, and keeping us under the shadow of his wing. -Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for being on the side of the just and the righteous. Thank you for being against those who oppress the poor, widows and orphans. Help me to help those who are helpless as much as I can. Amen.

Week of September 26, 2021

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday: Acts 18:12–19:10 Monday: Ezekiel 4-7 Tuesday: Ezekiel 8-11 Wednesday: Ezekiel 12-14 Thursday: Ezekiel 15-18 Friday: Ezekiel 19-21 Saturday: Psalms 106-108

VERSE TO REMEMBER O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. –Psalm 107:1

SUM RUN

DIRECTIONS: Below you see three boxes in which are 12 numbers. Each set of numbers is a different puzzle. The object is to look at the numbers and find the **THREE** numbers that add up to your **TARGET NUMBER**. There is only one right answer. **TIME YOURSELF** and record your time on the line provided. Then do the middle puzzle. Same rules apply. Time yourself again. Did your time improve? Finally, do the puzzle on the right and time yourself. Did you get any better?

Target #: 103

24	33	52	76
75	72	36	20
88	47	49	16

MY NUMBERS:

MY TIME:

13. food

Target #: 109342362468572372187433914

MY NUMBERS:

26 32 75 44 22 71 68 39 88 38 13 41

Target #: 142

----- -----MY TIME: _____

MY TIME: ____

MY NUMBERS:



Starting with the letter S (for September) name a: spruce, 4. snake, 5. scapula, 6. Syria 1. girl's name Sarah, 2. squash 5. body part 11. sofa, 12. Saturn, 13. spaghetti, 14. Sense and Sensibility, 15. salmo Saab, 10. sailboat, 17. soccer, 18. sanda Saving Private Ryan, 23. socia 2. vegetable 6. country Your answers may vary sapphire, 21. St., SUGGESTED RESPONSES TO 3. tree 7. chemical element **ANSWERS TO SUM RUN:** sodium, 8. surgeon, 4. animal 8. occupation 9. make of car 14. book 19. spice **EXERCISE: 103:** 20, 36, 47 **109:** 14, 23, 72 **142:** 22, 32, 88. 10. tool 15. fish 20. color 20. . sage, 11. piece of furniture 16. type of boat 21. abbreviation studies. 12. planet °, 17. sport 22. movie title ю. 19. 22.

23. School subject

18. footwear