

## Weekly Bible Study group – May 6, 2009

*This week's text: James 3:9*

Reflection by Bob Zurinsky, SPU Center for Worship

Last week at group we covered a larger section of James 3, focusing on the power of our words to bring both life and death to others. This week, instead of moving on to a new section of the text, we're staying in James 3 and narrowing our focus to just one key verse: James 3, verse 9.

**“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”**

(Jas 3:9-10)



(A 3<sup>rd</sup> century papyrus fragment containing James 3:9, discovered in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt.)

As one of the campus pastors at SPU, I meet a lot of students who are passionate about loving and worshiping God. I hear a lot of talk about having God be our single focus. Sometimes I even hear people wondering why we spend so much time talking about loving and serving people, when our single focus is supposed to be God.

But James' teaching this week is precisely the point. Is loving humanity a separate thing from loving God? Is it really a matter of spiritual importance, or just a side-note in our life of devotion to God? This is James' argument for why it matters: because human beings *are* the image of God, and for us to worship God *means* that we love one another. In the mind of James, it is completely absurd and contradictory to imagine that a person loves God and yet chooses to wound another human being. If you aren't utterly focused on loving humanity and yet you think that you're somehow worshiping your creator, you are mistaken. It's kind of exciting when you think about it... God's will for us isn't a hidden mystery – it's standing there staring us right in the face, in the form of each person we meet!