

**Week 5**

**8 weeks**  
**TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE >>**

*'Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.  
My brothers, this should not be.'*

**James 3:1-12**

**&**

**Luke 6:43-45**

# >> MORNING SERMON OUTLINE



## **How words can make a difference - JAMES 3:1-12**

James warns us to 'keep a tight rein' on our tongues, because what we say will be an indicator of what is going on in our hearts. Which one of us hasn't regretted saying something or felt the crippling effect of harsh words? How can we tame the tongue?

### **> WHAT WE SAY - A POWER FOR GOOD**

### **> WHAT WE SAY - A POWER FOR EVIL**

### **> HOW TO CONTROL THE TONGUE**

## >> A CLOSER LOOK

(James 3:1-12)



**NOTE:** Throughout the rest of the study, there are several questions for discussion. One or two of the questions allow a more creative approach. Feel free to adapt them as you see fit, but they are some ideas to prompt some more creative thinking! **These are marked by an asterisk \*.**

### >>Recap from last week

Read again **James 2:22**.

Can you see signs of your faith and actions working together? In what areas have you found it hard to be obedient to the things you believe God has been speaking to you about?

### > **WHAT WE SAY - A POWER FOR GOOD (v1-4)**

- Think about the teachers who have inspired you in the past (include teachers at church and in the wider sphere of education in general). What is it that makes you glad to have been taught by them?
- James gives two positive images of a small item giving direction to something much larger. Have you ever felt out of control on a horse or a boat? Why was this?
- Making the connection with teaching – why is it that teachers will be judged more strictly? What is the particular opportunity and responsibility that teachers in the church have?
- Making the connection with speech in general – why is it that words have such a powerful effect on us? Can you think of times when encouraging words have really helped you?

## > WHAT WE SAY - A POWER FOR EVIL (v5-8)

- Trace the images that James uses that liken harmful words to a fire. Why do you think he chooses the image of fire?
- Making the connection with teaching – why will harmful teaching in a church context be so devastating? Do you know examples of this happening?
- Making the connection with speech in general - many of us have been hurt by things that have been said to us and all of us have said things that we regret. When the tongue is out of control it causes devastating effects. Can you think of, and share with your group, times when you have known the reality of this?

## > HOW TO CONTROL THE TONGUE (v9-12)

*The implication behind these verses is that while the tongue cannot be tamed by human power it can be by God's power as God, by his grace, changes our heart. As we continue to study James we know that faith is proved genuine by the life change that accompanies it.*

- Read v 9-12 and ask the tough question – does my speech prove that my faith is genuine?

If not – then there are two options for us:

**Either** to realise we need to start the Christian life and fully submit ourselves to God

...**or** we need to get on our knees and ask God to tame our tongue. Which is right for you?

**>> ALTERNATIVE PASSAGE****A changed heart - LUKE 6:43-45**

Many of us have been brought up to speak 'properly' and 'politely'. And yet, if we're honest, we can also be quick to judge other people or speak words that are not good. In this passage, Jesus reveals what we need to know about our speech and the state of our hearts...

**> OUR SPEECH REVEALS...****> ...THE PROBLEM****> ...THE POTENTIAL**

## >> A CLOSER LOOK pt 2. (Luke 6:43-45)



### >>Recap from last week

- If you haven't yet done so, you may like to recap on last week and consider whether you have managed to make any changes in your life as a result? How did the study affect your life throughout the week?

### > OUR SPEECH REVEALS...

- \* Develop a list of common things that we say in 'everyday speech' that reveal something about our lives? (eg. *We often ask 'How are you?', but then we either don't really listen to the answer, or hope that the person doesn't start telling us how they really are!*)
- \*Think about some of the most embarrassing things that you have said in your life and wished you hadn't! (If you're in a group, and are feeling brave, share
- Jesus highlights that a good tree never bears bad fruit, and that a bad fruit never bears good fruit. In other words, no matter how much we might pretend, the truth about our hearts is seen in the way we talk. Why is this true? (*You may like to share some stories when you have said something that you know was not good, which revealed a deeper issue in your heart.*)

## > ...THE PROBLEM

- No matter how much we might like to pretend that we are always 'good', our speech reveals what our hearts are really like. And, frankly, it doesn't look good! What do you think Jesus means when he talks about 'good' and 'evil' being 'stored up in your heart' (v45)?
- In Romans 3:12-13, the Apostle Paul highlights that fact that all of us have 'evil stored up in our hearts'. As such, some serious heart surgery is required! However, Paul also highlights the solution to our problem (Romans 3:22). In what sense should the reality that we are unrighteous, but made righteous by Jesus, alter our speech?
- Jesus talks of speech coming from the 'overflow of our hearts' (v45). In a sense, we cannot prevent what is in our hearts coming out; in the same way that if you keep filling a cup, it will inevitably overflow. Therefore, what you fill up with is important! How can you make sure that you keep on storing up 'good' rather than 'evil' in your heart? (cf. Philippians 4:8-9)

## > ...THE POTENTIAL

People notice the fruit on a tree - you don't go to an apple tree if you want an orange! In the same way, people can clearly see the fruit of our lives. We can't pretend to be something we are not. This presents a great challenge, but also a real opportunity - the more we have our hearts changed by God, the more people will notice and turn to Christ.



## MAKING A CHANGE *(James 3:1-12)*



### WHAT CHANGES CAN YOU MAKE THIS WEEK?

*It's important to act on what you have studied. Can you think of some specific changes that you can make during this week, as a response to what you have been looking at?*

- Look carefully back over the words you have spoken and written in the last few days. Have these honoured God and have they honoured other people who are made in God's image?
- Make a resolution to say five constructive things to people you know over the next week.
- Pray for those who teach adults and children at our Church and in schools – that their tongues will be tamed by God.



## MAKING A CHANGE *(Luke 6:43-45)*



*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.*

*(Philippians 4:8)*

Print out these words of Philippians 4:8, and put them somewhere visible, ready for when you are tempted (eg. on top of your TV, on your fridge, in your car etc).

And at the start of every day this week, why not pray the following words from Psalm 51, and then thank God for his forgiveness, and his Spirit at work in your life changing you.

*'Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.'*

*(Psalm 51:10)*