

- what point is James making in vs 7 & 8? How does James' point square with the majority of people's approach when it comes to 'speech control'?
- James writes in vs 11,12 that the only way to change the way we speak is to have a heart change, heart surgery, a change in the source of our speech? But it's not as simple as saying that 'when Jesus comes into your heart he changes the way we speak.' How does this heart-change actually work in practice? How does the gospel have the power to change our speech? (think back to last week!)



WORSHIPPING. Worship to our Heavenly Father is expressed in adoration and praise, and also in confession when we realise our sin. Perhaps someone in the group might read Psalm 51:10-12 and you could use it as a basis for prayer.



CARING. Perhaps there's one area of your speech life where you would really value the prayer and support of the rest of your group. It may be in having to hold back in speech when dealing with a difficult work colleague or family member.



ENGAGING. A big thanks to all who contributed towards the Bible Society Alternative Gift. We reached our target of £350 which enables us to supply the paper for 600 Bibles for Christians in China. Isn't it great to know that we in Ballyloughan, in such a simple way, can make a difference to the lives of Chinese believers! Next week, yes next week (!) is the Christmas Celebration for all the family including Ceilidh with 'the McStockers.' It's for all the church family as well as being a bridge building event for non church-goers. Use WORDS to INVITE! Remember also the Christmas Services and Alpha, commencing on Thursday 31st January 2008, at the Café, in the new Ballymena North Centre, Cushendall Road. Pray for all of these events. Plan to bring people...



SERVING. God's desire is that we would never use our words to curse other people, but rather to encourage them and lift them up. How can you use your words in the coming week to build up and bless another person. Perhaps there's someone around Ballyloughan that you would want to drop a word or note of encouragement to. P.S. not the minister! – this is not him looking for encouragement!!!! J

Midweek ministry @ Ballyloughan

worshipping, growing, caring, serving, engaging

James: A down-to-earth faith
6 - How to manage your mouth (3:1-12)
Notes for 5th December

4 American newspaper reporters illustration! In this passage James is expanding on what he has already referred to in 1:26: *"keeping a tight rein on your tongue."*

I. _____ the _____.

vs 1,2: *"not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."*

James begins by giving a warning for those who would become bible teachers in the church: to 'teach' we use speech, and it would appear that among James audiences there was some particular pastoral problem of which we have no details - people who were assuming or aspiring to teaching roles who didn't have the necessary gifting or character or right motives? What a warning these verses are to all who have some role of teaching the Bible. Handling and teaching the Word of God is a huge responsibility and with that comes great accountability: v1, *"you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly..."* One day our work will be tested and evaluated.

II. _____ the _____.

(i) *My tongue _____ the course of my _____.* James' key emphasis in these verses not necessarily on the power of the tongue to harm others but on the power of the tongue to direct the course of our own lives. Two illustrations:

v3, *"when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal."*

v4, *"take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go."*

The tongue is small – 0.4% of a person's total body weight - but it has a power out of all proportion to its size, power to control the course of our own lives. For example, words clothe our thoughts, words strengthen our thoughts. Our words heighten that which we already feel. Some people lament that life is not working well for them, the wonder why their lives are full of broken relationships and thwarted plans – but if you trace their problems back far enough, you often find a trail of reckless words.

(ii) **My tongue can** _____.

v5, “consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.”

The tongue can do great damage, again to our own lives - v6 “*The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*” - and also to others.

What we say can have huge effects on others. That little bit of gossip, the piece of innuendo, that biting criticism, that conversation where we put someone else down, that hasty word spoken in anger, that breaking of a confidence, that lie told to someone. With just one word we can cut someone to the quick, destroy someone’s reputation, a church’s reputation, a friendship. The tongue is a devastating tool in our mouths. Proverbs 18:21 “*the tongue has the power of life and death...*” The tongue can kill – physically, psychologically, relationally.

(iii) **I cannot** _____ **my tongue.**

vs 7,8: “*All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*”

Human beings can do amazing things, says James, but the one thing we cannot do: control, tame our own tongues. If we try to improve our speech life purely by pulling our socks up, trying to turn over a new leaf, we’re destined to fail. Just trying, willpower isn’t enough.

III. _____ **the** _____.

vs 11,12: “*Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grape vine bear figs. Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*”

The problem with our speech is that there’s something wrong with the source. Prov. 16:23 which says, “*A wise man’s heart guides his mouth.*” Matthew 12:34, “*out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*” The heart is where the true problem lies - what fills your heart, your control centre, is what determines how you speak. e.g. why do we lie or gossip or belittle others, react angrily when criticised etc.? Because at that very moment, people’s approval, looking good, being liked and admired is the most important thing to you. So how do we control, heal, change the way we speak? We need to fill our hearts with something new – Jesus. You see Jesus on the cross experienced the ultimate silent treatment from the Father. Why? So that we could get the ultimate acceptance of God. So that we could know that God delights in us. When we fill our hearts, our lives with Jesus, then finally we are free.

Follow-on Material for 12th December

Please do not feel that you have to stick rigidly to this material!



GROWING

Read James 3: 1-12

- Describe a time when the words of another person had a lasting impact on you in either a positive or negative way.
- What three images does James use to paint a picture of the power of our words? What do these images have in common?
- James focuses primarily not so much on the power of the tongue to wound others, but on the power of the tongue to direct the course of the life of the speaker (vs 3-6). In what ways can our tongues direct the course of our very lives?
- There are three major areas where we can get in trouble with our words. They are lying, slandering and devaluing people with our words. Finish one of the statements below...
 - § I know lying is dangerous and damaging. The ninth commandment calls us never to lie. Lying is forbidden by God because...
 - § Slander or gossip is the passing out of damaging information about one person to another person. Slander is so damaging because...
 - § Jesus said, “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:22). Jesus was so concerned about how we speak to others because...