

CWC

Encourage Her

Monday ● April 29, 2024 ● 6:00 p.m.

The Power of the Tongue

James 3:3-6

Notes

Illustrations are effective because they bring lofty and sometimes difficult-to-understand concepts down to our realm of experience and understanding.

The horse and bit and ship and rudder – Both of these illustrations have the same meaning. Horses and ships are hard to control. But it is possible to control them. A small tool (bit and rudder) can help you to steer these powerful objects. The bit and rudder are little parts of their respective whole but are extremely important if you want to control the whole. They are small but hold great influence.

In similar manner, the tongue is also little, but it too holds tremendous power. If you can control the tongue, you can control the body.

1. What are some practical ways to control your tongue?
2. What could happen if you speak carelessly?

In verses 5-6, we see the amazing destructive capacity of the tongue. A fire starts off very small but can spread quickly and devour millions of acres before it burns out. Often, fires are started by careless people who smoke and don't put out their cigarettes or leave a few sparks at the bottom of a campfire. A little spark in the right conditions can lead to expansive wildfires that destroy life and property. Just a few seconds of care on the front side can save vast devastation later.

Psalms 39:1 – I said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked.”

And once that fire starts spreading, even the coordinated effort of thousands of firefighters often can’t stop it. The time to stop a wildfire is before it starts!

Proverbs 10:19 – Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

The tongue is the same. Words, once spoken, cannot be unsaid. Kids on playgrounds like to say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” But the saying cannot be further from the truth. Words can hurt. They do hurt. You surely can remember times when people have spoken hurtful things to you, and that hurt may still be there. Words can rip apart relationships, cause depression, and start wars.

3. Why do you think James has such a negative view of the tongue?
4. How can our tongue defile our entire body?
5. Can you think of a story in the Bible where this is happened?

King Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, discovered the hard way the harm foolish words can do. After he became king, the eleven non-Judah tribes came to him to ask that their workload be lightened. The elders encouraged him to speak gently, knowing that a “gentle answer turns away wrath.” But Rehoboam instead listened to hotheads. See what he says.

1 Kings 12:8, 14 – But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. He spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to

your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

As a result, the other tribes revolted, and there was war for generations.

Another example of words spreading like wildfire is the crucifixion of Jesus, as many of the same people that shouted “Hosanna” days earlier shouted “Crucify Him” because of the poisonous whispers of the Pharisees.

A fire can damage in different ways. Not only does it burn, but smoke goes far beyond the actual fire, choking, stinging, and spreading an awful smell. Words can also extend far beyond what you expect and impact others, even in faraway places.

6. How does it set the course of our life on fire?
7. Since the tongue has such capacity for evil, should we just cut it out or stay silent?

Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Cutting out our tongues could, in fact, help us control what we say. We couldn't say anything. With our words, we couldn't slander, gossip, lie, boast, etc. But it would leave our hearts unchanged. We could then still use our body language, gestures, or writing to do those very things. Much can be communicated through a glare.

The root of the problem is our sinful heart. We are sinful people. The key is to let our hearts be regenerated, renewed and be clean, like [David](#) prayed to God to create in him a clean heart. If we don't have the desire to lie, we won't. If we don't want to harm people through slander, we won't. Yet we still must learn to control our tongues for two reasons:

Firstly, there are still remnants of our old nature left. Some wrong desires are still there. Temptations rise up. We need first to not say the wrong thing, then confess the thought to the Lord and move on. If you

Speak it out, the problem will often grow. One lie will bring another, which will bring two, and then three more. When you start to argue, it is tough to stop. The other person will likely respond in kind, and then you will respond in anger, and the issue will grow. The solution is to stop it at the beginning.

Our tongues are very fast. Sometimes they act before our mind can really evaluate what we are saying. This is often the case with jokes or ridiculing others. In this situation, we need to apply James 1:19 and be quick to listen and slow to speak.

8. When you have hurt someone or been hurt by words.
9. What is an example of sinful speech that you sometimes struggle with?
10. Share some methods that help you avoid negative speech.

The other side of the coin is to speak positive words – The solution to tongue problems is not to remain silent. Though the tongue is very powerful with the potential for great harm, it also has the potential for great good. That is why God gave us tongues!

1 Sam. 25:32-35

”David replied to Abigail, “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you to meet me today! Thank God for your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and from carrying out vengeance with my own hands. For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal’s men would still be alive tomorrow morning.”

Without speaking, we cannot share the gospel. Without speaking, we cannot encourage others. Let us learn to use our words to pursue peace and build others up.

Nabal had foolishly rejected David’s request and in such a way that it greatly angered him. Had Abigail remained silent, it would have ended in

ruin for her household and it would have damaged David's reputation and character. Abigail used her words to diffuse a situation that was headed for disaster.

11. What are some practical ways that you can reduce evil speech?

12. What are some practical ways that you can use your words for good?

Consider how to use your words to encourage others. This week intentionally speak edifying words to build others up each day. For example, you can aim to give at least three compliments to your spouse every day this week!