

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Sept. 18, 2011

Passage: James 3:5b-12

Memory Passage: James 3:5b-6

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 3:5b-12.** In v. 5b James changes from the positive functions of the tongue to its damaging capabilities. How does 5b connect with the preceding verses?
- (b) From v. 6: How is your tongue, “a world of unrighteousness” (probably better translated as “the world of unrighteousness”)? What results can your fiery tongue produce? From where does your tongue get its fire?
- (c) What connections do you see between James 5b-6 and James 1:26-27? In what ways can your tongue “stain” your whole body? Is body here referring to your individual body or to the body of Christ? How do you know?
- (d) *Family:* Find and show a video of the fires burning in Texas (as I write this the fires are only 30% contained), a sample of one is found here: <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1144985732001/massive-wildfire-burns-out-of-control-in-texas>. Then discuss how these huge fires were started by just one spark (a small fire) and quickly grew into these large, destructive fires. Then **Read James 1:5b-6** and explain to your family that just as a tiny flame can start a huge forest fire so our tongue, even though small, can cause a huge amount of damage that keeps on spreading. Next write 2 statements on your white board: “I hate you!” & “Thank you so much for all you do!” Discuss the emotions one feels when receiving each of these statements, and then help them understand how these statements can have effects that linger long after the words are spoken (just like a small fire can create a huge fire that keeps on spreading).

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 3:5b-12.** Write down several ways in which your tongue has been a “restless evil, full of deadly poison.” How have these instances “set on fire the entire course of life” for you (v. 6)?
- (b) **Read Col. 4:6 & Eph. 4:29.** How can implementing these verses on a daily basis rescue you from setting damaging fires with your words? What would be the result of your speech if you *always* thought about what those who heard your words needed for edification and grace? Write down examples of words or phrases you will avoid if you are eschewing “corrupting talk.” Write down a list of words or phrases you will hear yourself say if you are intentionally building up and giving grace.
- (c) How do these lists compare with your speech when you get mad, offended, impatient, wounded, neglected, or embarrassed? How do they compare with your speech toward those who are unlovely, or from a different social status, or who are involved in sinful lifestyles, or who have differing views about life & godliness than you?
- (d) *Family:* **Read Eph. 4:29.** Think of several (6-8) instances that cause stress and lead to harsh words in your home (e.g. one person is grouchy, someone is pestering their sibling, one sibling invades the space of another, etc.). Have your family list words that are “corrupting” in each situation and lead to broken relationships and write them on the left side or your whiteboard under the heading “Corrupting.” Then on the other side, under the heading “building up,” write all of the words that could be used to express feelings in the same situation if the speaker intends to speak only words that are good for edification. Pray for God to give everyone in your family the wisdom and patience to speak to each other with edifying words.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 3:5b-12.** How do we “bless our Lord and Father” with our mouth? Is this just the act of giving praise to God or is there more to what James is saying?
- (b) In what ways can we “curse” people, and why does James tell us that this is bad (v. 9)? How often do you find yourself cursing people? How often do you remind yourself that even someone who has made you mad, hurt your feelings, or done any other thing to you is created in God’s image? Why should this fact affect your speech toward them?
- (c) **Read Prov. 12:22, 17:4, 18:23, 19:5, 9 & 29:5.** What ways are you involved in lying/deception? Don’t dismiss the question as not applicable to you until you ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your heart. Do you state only part of the truth in order to make you look better? Do you let others speak lies without correcting them? Do you misrepresent the truth in ways that you are technically not lying (saying blatantly false words) but you are intentionally allowing your hearers to come away with a version of the situation that is less than true? Do you have such a problem saying, “I was wrong” that you twist the truth in order to avoid taking responsibility for your actions? Do you lie about things that don’t matter just to make yourself look better? Do you find yourself lying to cover up other lies you have told? How do these lies set the entire course of your life on fire? Stop and pray right now, repenting of this sin and asking God to convict you before you lie in the future.
- (d) *Family:* **Read Prov. 12:22, 17:4 & 19:5, 9.** Explain to your family what lying is, and why it is a sin (God is truth, so lying violates His character). Then explain, but using a story from your own life, how one lie leads to another and then to

another until the truth is hard to remember. Also explain how lying destroys the trust in a relationship and how hard it is to regain that trust using an example from your life as a child in which you lied and destroyed the trust of your parents. If you can't think of times you have lied, then make up a story that illustrates the points.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:5b-12.** What answer do you suppose James expects for the 2 questions he asks in vs. 11-12? How are these questions relative to the current verses, and what is he telling us with these illustrations?

(b) **Read Prov. 16:28, 17:9, 18:8 & 26:20-22.** Why is the Bible so strongly opposed to gossip? What is sinful about it? Why does it dishonor God? Would you consider yourself a gossip? If not, do you ever gossip?

(c) Reflect on these questions to check the accuracy of your answer: Do you ever start a conversation with the words, “Do you promise not to tell *anyone* what I am about to tell you? Did you hear what happened to . . .? I can't tell you how I know this, but . . .” Do you find yourself answering the questions, “How do you know this?” or “Who told you that?” with, “I can't tell you” or “_____ told _____ who then told _____ who told me!” Do you ever talk to a third party about the hurt that a second party has caused without first talking to the second party? When you find yourself in the place of the 3rd party being gossiped to, do you ever say, “Stop right there! If we are going to talk about (the 2nd party) let's go to their house right now and have the conversation in front of them!” Do you ever pass information on as fact when you have only heard it as a rumor or innuendo? Do you ever observe someone speaking or doing something, judge their motives without asking them what they intended, and then form your opinion & go and tell others the “why” of what was said/done based solely on your unconfirmed assumptions?

(d) I could go on with questions, but I hope you get the point by now: Gossip is insidious, especially in churches, and it is an abomination to the Lord. It is also destructive, and starts many out of control wildfires among the people of God. **FLEE FROM THIS SIN!**

(e) *Family:* **Read Prov. 16:28, 17:9; 18:8 & 26:20-22.** Explain to your family what gossip is (ESV “whispering”), and give examples from your own life about how destructive it can be to one's character and relationships. Explain that gossip is part of the dangerous fire that can be set by our tongues and should be avoided at all costs. You might be able to use some of the questions in (c) to help you with your descriptions.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:5b-12, Matt. 12:33-37 & 15:10-20.** Since I am already out of space this week we will only deal with one final set of questions about James 3:5b-12 with help from Jesus' teaching in Matthew: How does Jesus help us understand what James means when he tells us in 1:27 that we must, if we are to exhibit authentic faith, bridle our tongues and then says in 3:8 that it is impossible for human beings to tame our tongue? How does James' statement in 3:10, “My brothers, these things ought not to be so” affect our understanding of James' intent? What is the entire point of James teaching on the tongue with regard to authentic faith?

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Consider Your Tongue Part II: Tongue Taming