

Home group discussion questions—February 14th 2014

James 3:1-12—Speech Marks

Read: James 3:1-12

1. Speech does indeed mark us. James writes in a fairly negative tone; but think of conversations you have had over the last few days – conversations that have made you laugh, conversations that have encouraged you and conversations that have made you think? What are some of the qualities of a good use of the tongue?
2. An interpretive decision needs to be taken as to whether the whole passage is determined by v.1-2 (i.e. it is essentially about the responsible speech of *teachers*) or whether it has wider application. Staying with v.1, what are the primary dangers and pitfalls for those called to teach God's truth within the church community?
3. In v.3-4 James uses two images to emphasise that our tongue can have a positive, guiding influence in our lives far beyond its size. Read **Proverbs 12:18-19; Proverbs 15:1-2**. Do you agree with James that the way we use our tongues affects our whole body—& if you agree, how does this happen?
4. v.5-6 (in contrast) is an image of the destructive power of speech – like a spark that sets a forest on fire. It is not difficult to think of examples. Why do you think James is making so much of this in this letter?
5. v.7-8 seem to imply a hopeless situation – our tongues simply cannot be tamed. What difference does the Gospel of Jesus make? Notice, for example, how the fire of heaven (rather than hell) i.e. Pentecost first affected their *speech*. Acts 2:3-4. How does the Holy Spirit work to change our speech? Cf **Isaiah 50:4; Ephesians 5:4; 15-20**
6. What is the primary point James is making in v.9-12? How can we encourage consistency and integrity in our speech? Cf **Mathew 12:33-37**.

Slowly read **Colossians 3:12-17**. Have some time in quiet meditation and then take time to praise God.

