



Just Grow Up!

James - A Manual for Maturity

The Power of My Words

1. Have you ever said something that the minute you said it, you wished that you hadn't? What happened as a result of what you said?
2. Read James 3:1-12. In this passage, what does it compare the tongue to in regard to controlling the direction of our lives? How can our tongue control the direction of our lives? As far as its destructive power, what are our words compared to? Have you ever seen words ignite a "fire"? How?
3. Pastor Rick said that there are four ways the tongue can be used for good or bad, what were they? From the four good things our tongues can do, can you think of some examples you have either experienced or witnessed?
4. In verse eight, it says that no man can tame the tongue. So what hope do we have of doing so? Hint: Read Galatians 5:22.
5. According to verse two, it says that a person who is not at fault in what he says is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check. What do you think this means?
6. Read Ephesians 4:25-29. In this passage, what does it say we should not do in our speech? What do you think it means to not let any "unwholesome" talk come out of your mouth? (Hint: It is the opposite of what this passage says should come out of your mouth). It also speaks about not letting anger control you. Do you think there is a connection between controlling your anger and controlling your speech? Have you experienced this personally?
7. If you struggle with saying things that you should not, what can you do starting today to help you change your speech? Read James 1:19 for some insight on how to begin.

ANSWERS

2. As far as controlling the direction of our lives, the tongue is compared to a bit in the mouth of a horse and the rudder of a ship. It can control our lives in the sense that people will react to what we say, both positive and negative. Being fired or being promoted in a job can be the result of what we say to people, as an example. As for its destructive power, it is compared to a spark that can start a forest fire.
3. The four positive and negative ways our tongue can be used are: a. Cause conflict or calm a situation; b. Create lies or cultivate a good life; c. Corrupt others or communicate grace; and d. Condemn a life or compel someone to salvation.
4. Galatians 5:22 says that one of the fruits produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit is self control. Only the Holy Spirit is able to control how we use our tongues, so we must be yielded to the Spirit if we are ever to have any hope of controlling our tongues.
5. The Greek word that is translated “perfect” in our English versions does not mean “sinlessness”. It literally means to be complete, to be mature. A mature Christian is one who can control his tongue because he is controlled by the Holy Spirit. Your ability or inability to control what you say is a good measurement of your spiritual maturity.
6. This passage says that we should not lie to each other and we should not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths. It says what comes out of our mouths should build others up according to their needs. So, unwholesome talk would be the opposite: Anything we say for the purpose of hurting another person or tearing them down would be unwholesome. Profanity, sarcasm, and joking can all be unwholesome talk when the purpose of it is to hurt someone else. Even saying something that is true about someone can be unwholesome when the purpose is to tear them down. Intention is a big part of what makes speech unwholesome. God is just as concerned with our intentions as He is with our actions.
7. James 1:19 says to be swift to listen and slow to speak. A good place to start with learning how to control your speech is to be a good listener. The other half is to think about what you are going to say and ask yourself what your intention is in saying it before you say it. Some people claim that they always just say what is on their mind which is just an excuse to not have to control what they say, as if it is a virtue. A great way to begin to allow the Holy Spirit to control your speech is to memorize verses that tell us how to and not to talk. This passage in James is a great one to memorize, as well as Ephesians 4:29 and think about what these verses say before we say anything. If your problem is anger-fueled speech, memorize verses that talk about controlling your anger.