

James: Practical Discipleship for Everyone

3. James 3

Aim: To consider that how we speak about others can have big consequences and how our speech can either hurt others or glorify God.

Ice-breaker: (In small groups or as a large group)

When did you last say something that you later regretted? How did it make you feel / what were the consequences afterwards? [Encourage people to be open in sharing but not to mention names!]

In this chapter, James continues to tackle the issue of dissention and rivalry in the church community, turning to look at how they speak about each other and how that is affecting the whole body.

1. Read James 3.1-12
 - a. In v.1-5, what point is James trying to make about the size of the tongue and the effect it can have?
 - b. Can you think of any examples from Bible passages that you know of where someone's speech or tongue got them into trouble? What was the root cause of their hurtful speech?
2. In v.6, James appears to suggest that pride is the reason the tongue can so be dangerous. What is it about pride that can cause such big consequences?
3. Reading v.6-10, it might seem like we should never say anything at all! Instead of taking a vow of silence, what do you think a positive reaction to James' dire warnings about the danger of the tongue might be that still allows us to speak?

4. James is not just addressing hurtful speech in general but particularly in a church context. Why do you think that what we say and how we say it can be so disruptive in a Christian fellowship or community?
5. Many of us will regularly use email, text, or social media to communicate with each other. What are the pitfalls and drawbacks of this kind of communication compared with speaking?
How might we go about using these rightly in a church context, bearing in mind what James has said?
6. Read James 3.13-18
How does James suggest we tackle the issue of hurtful speech amongst ourselves?
What might these attributes of wisdom look like practically for us?

Prayer

It would be great to pray at this point in small groups about how we might be able to use James' words practically in our own lives - if people are aware of relationships / friendships that have been strained or broken due to hurtful words, pray especially with them. Encourage people to be as open as they feel able! You may want to emphasise God's grace for past mistakes and how there is now 'no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'. (Romans 8.1)