

JAMES

A Faith That Works

Study 9

Speech and Spirituality Part 1

James 3:1-5

A) Sins of speech will be judged and particularly severely in teachers

James 3:1

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

1) a) Discussion Question. How many teachers should there be in a church? One per hundred? One per fifty? One per 20? One in every 10?

b) Reflection Question. How does knowing teachers will be judged more strictly make you feel?

c) Discussion Question. Other passages like Acts 20:26-30 and Galatians 1:6-8 warn us about false teachers within the church. What should we do about these warnings?

Quick Verse Reference

Acts 20:26-30

Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Galatians 1:6-8

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

B) Sins of speech are a universal problem

James 3:2

We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

2) a) Reflection question. James in verse 2 says that “We all stumble in many ways”, go one round and share some of the ways you have stumbled in speech?

b) Reflection question. Read Matthew 12:36. Are you willing to consent to God changing you in the area of speech? Or would you insist on “free speech”?

Quick Verse Reference

Matthew 12:36

But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

C) Speech has an outsized impact in our lives

James 3:3-5

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

3) a) Discussion Question. In what ways does the tongue have the capacity to “corrupt the whole body”? Is it through gossiping; crude joking; being a harsh boss, spouse, or critic; being overly negative or lying?

b) Discussion Question. Is saying the wrong things really that bad? (you may comment on Sigmund Freud quote in the box below)

Background information

“Words have a magical power. They can bring either the greatest happiness or deepest despair; they can transfer knowledge from teacher to student; words enable the orator to sway his audience and dictate its decisions. Words are capable of arousing the strongest emotions and prompting all men’s actions.” - Sigmund Freud

“Thus, by exercising consistent positive thoughts and speech, we not only change our self perception, but how we perceive the world around us. Ultimately, this grants us the ability the shape our reality and change the world for the better.” - Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman

Takeaway

- A) Sins of speech will be judged and particularly severely in teachers
- B) Sins of speech are a universal problem
- C) Speech has an outsized impact in our lives

Case Study

Case 1 – Speech that Tears down

Fiery Tang is someone who just says what she wants.

In church, she saw a young lady dressed in a low cut shirt and told her off saying: “Why wear so sexy? Want to open shop is it?”

She saw another lady not well-dressed, and told her: “Why you dress like aunty? You so young, dress like your age lah!”

One lady who was overweight and eating lunch by herself. Fiery saw her and commented: “Stop eating so much la, so fat already, later no guys would want you!”

Fiery ate some of the food prepared by the Heaven’s Ministry. She say: “Yerrr the food is terrible. I can’t believe I paid for this!”

When one of the church goer approached her and ask her not to say these things, she replied: “I say only mahhh.. Who ask the person so sensitive?!”

1) a) Discussion question. If you attend the same life group as Fiery, what would you do?

b) Discussion question. If you were one of the people Fiery commented on, how would you feel?

c) Reflection question. Do you think God can change someone like Fiery? Would you pray for someone like Fiery?

d) Discussion question. Take turns reading Ephesians 4:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24-25, Romans 14:19 and Hebrews 3:13. Instead of saying negative comments that tear others down, what should Christians do instead?

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Romans 14:19

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

d) Encouraging task. We can all follow this instruction now! Have each person in the group say one encouraging thing about another member. There shouldn't be any repetitions. (don't pick the same person to encourage)