



Living with integrity

Discovering ways to live with integrity, being the same person on the inside and outside.

REVIEW

Recap on your experience of the challenge. Ask the following questions:

How did it go? Was it helpful?

If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question:

Where and how did you experience God last week?

REAL LYFE

TALK TALK

Controlling our tongue and the words that come out of our mouth is one of life's greatest challenges. Our words can build up and tear down. They can bring life or they can bring death. When it comes to centring our lives on Jesus, we often talk about 'walking the talk' – we have to also remember how we 'talk the walk'.

READ

† James 3. 1-12

The Tongue

¹ My friends, we should not all try to become teachers. In fact, teachers will be judged more strictly than others.

² All of us do many wrong things. But if you can control your tongue, you are mature and able to control your whole body. ³ By putting a bit into the mouth of a horse, we can turn the horse in different directions.

⁴ It takes strong winds to move a large sailing ship, but the captain uses only a small rudder to make it go in any direction. ⁵ Our tongues are small too, and yet they brag about big things.

It takes only a spark to start a forest fire!

⁶ The tongue is like a spark. It is an evil power that dirties the rest of the body and sets a person's entire life on fire with flames that come from hell itself. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures can be tamed and have been tamed. ⁸ But our tongues get out of control. They are restless and evil, and always spreading deadly poison.

⁹ My dear friends, with our tongues we speak both praises and curses. ¹⁰ We praise our Lord and Father, and we curse people who were created to be like God, and this isn't right. ¹¹ Can clean water and dirty water both flow from the same spring? ¹² Can a fig tree produce olives or a grapevine produce figs? Does fresh water come from a well full of salt water?

Contemporary English Verse - CEV

REFLECT

Setting the scene:

▶ Teaching (as seen in the tradition of rabbis and Jesus himself) was an important role within the early church and many were attracted to the prestige of this ministry. James wants to impress the importance of teaching, and the closer scrutiny of the lives that inevitably comes with that responsibility. The main tool for this ministry is the tongue. All of us, not just teachers struggle with controlling our tongues.

- ▶ Control is the emphasis in v 2- 4. If the tongue is not restrained, then the rest of us is likely to be uncontrolled and undisciplined. James borrows imagery of his day – horses, boats and the dry Mediterranean forests that could so easily catch fire.
- ▶ Blessing and cursing are opposites. James intends blessing to be the best way to use speech. Cursing in this culture was not simply swearing – but a desire that they may be cut off from God. Jesus insisted that we ‘bless those who curse you.’ James sees

a person’s speech as a barometer of their spirituality. A pure heart cannot produce false, bitter or harmful speech.

- ▶ What are the ‘shockers’ and ‘blockers’ for you in this passage?
- ▶ When did your words last get you into trouble?
- ▶ “A persons speech is a barometer of their spirituality” – would you agree?

RESPOND

Talk Talk Challenge: This session invites us to explore the topic of speech. As a group, create a challenge to help you to control the words and language you use this week.

Challenge ideas:
If you struggle to come up with your own challenge then why not try one of the following...

01 Listen Up

Earlier in the book of James, we read of his advice to be ‘quick to listen and slow to speak’ (James 1.19). This week, pay more attention to the conversations you have with your family, friends, work colleagues, children and intentionally try to listen harder. This focus on ‘listening’ is not just about the words, but observe body language, tone of

voice and the words used. In your conversation, be slower to respond and think more carefully about the words you will use.

02 Last Words

You may want to practice the discipline of not always having the last word. Sometimes we are too intent on getting across our point of view or opinion or showing off our knowledge or competence or even trying to prove ourself above others. This week try allowing the last words to rest with other people in your conversations.

03 Stop the Gossip

Gossip is a form of judgement – usually negative comments about someone when they are not present. We are

all prone to gossip – but this week, intentionally focus on refusing to gossip and walk away or stop others around when they do. Try to focus on speaking well of everyone you know. If you blow it – make sure you apologise and ask for their forgiveness.

“The reason a dog has so many friends is that he wags his tail more than his tongue.”

Don't Forget

1. To record your experience of the challenge so that you can accurately share it with your lyfe group when you next meet. You might like to text/tweet each other throughout the experience!
2. Consider posting your created challenge on the lyfe facebook site for others to view.

More resources on 'Real Lyfe'

- Listen to video interview with James Catford
- Read article by Antony Billington on Holiness
- Read 'lyfe story' biographies on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Desmond Tutu
- Recommended reading – *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul* by Restoring Sabbath by Mark Buchanan

GROUP PRAYER:

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to overcome tendencies to talk too much and instead to try to honour God with our speech.