

Life Group Questions for Jan 24, 2021
Atonement Fargo

This week in Life Group we are going to consider the words we say, our speech, and the unwholesome things that come out of our mouths. In preparation for this we will ask your Life Groups to do a little advanced reading. Contact the people in your Life Group before you meet. Ask them to read the book of James before they come to group. As they are reading, ask them to write down everything that James says about how we speak (the things we say) to people and about people. Have them bring that list with them to Life Group and be ready to discuss their lists.

Throughout the book of James, the apostle uses the term “tongue” as a metaphor for the things that we say. Start the discussion time by asking your Life Group members to share their lists and thoughts about the things they wrote down.

In James 1:26, we read, “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.” Here James uses the metaphor of using a bridle to control our speech. What are actual bridles used for and what image comes to mind when using this metaphor to control our speech? Keep in mind that James is directing his letter to the followers of Jesus, not people outside the church.

According to James, what are some of the more destructive ways in which we use our tongues? Think back to your observations from reading the book. List out as many as possible. Does James offer any advice as to how to control the negative and destructive affects of the things we say?

Some of the words we say are obviously unwholesome and unholy and down-right spiritually destructive. Bearing false witness immediately comes to mind. Adam and Eve, our first parents, tried to lie to God. So too, their son Cain did much the same attempting to cover up the murder of his brother. In light of this, it is not at all surprising that “Thou shalt not bear false witness” made it into the Ten Commandments. But there are other ways in which we make poor use of the words we chose to say.

Read Deuteronomy 1:27 and Psalm 106:25. These two passages speak of the same behavior. What’s coming out of the mouths of God’s people in these two passages? A synonym for this behavior is *grumble*. Throughout the books of Exodus and Numbers, which tells the account of God delivering his people from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, through this account we frequently see how the Israelites were grumbling against God and Moses. What was the result of their grumbling? But grumbling isn’t limited to the Old Testament. Throughout the Gospels the Pharisees and even Jesus own disciples are grumbling. Does *murmuring* or *grumbling* make matters better or worse? Read Philippians 2:14 and James 5:9. What do these two apostles have to say about grumbling?

As with murmuring and grumbling, we could do a similar study of what the Bible has to say about slander, mocking, and a host of other vile things that come out of our mouths.

But for some reason, gossip seems to be different. For some reason, people will readily gossip without giving it a second thought. It truly can be one of our “favorite sins.”

Have each member of your Life Group write down his or her definition of gossip. As soon as everyone has completed, have the group share the definitions they have come up with.

Are there any people in your life about whom you are more naturally inclined to gossip? Why does gossip come so naturally to us? Do you consider gossip as destructive as false witness, slander, mocking, or murmuring? Why or why not? Now let's put the shoe on the other foot. What is our reaction when we find out that people have been gossiping about us? If gossiping can be so destructive, particularly within the Christian community, why do you think we are not more concerned about correcting it? What are some of the best ways to correct gossip?

Now let's switch gears.

Read Ephesians 4:15-16. What fundamental principle does this passage teach us about the words we say? A gossip might try to say what he or she is speaking is true. How does speaking the truth in love, differ from gossip? Give some examples of what this looks like in your world. If we follow the principle Paul teaches in this passage, what is the hoped-for result? Why is this principle so challenging for us to follow?

Have the group read Luke 6:27-38 and 43-45: What does Jesus have to say regarding the words we say? How does this differ from words of slander, mocking, murmuring, and lying? Jesus says that your words are formed by what is in your heart (v. 45), and not simply what's in your heart, but what's abundant in your heart. When we gossip, what is abundant in our hearts? What prayer can we pray for God to change our heart? What words would be better suited when we are tempted to gossip? Perhaps for some private reflection, who in your life could benefit from you speaking words of blessing and encouragement?