



In this passage James is writing into a situation where the church has been divided and split by the negative words and selfish teaching of people within the fellowship. James sees first hand the damage done by the tongue and those who are motivated by selfish ambition and pride.

The focus of James in this passage, is all about the tongue and how the words we speak have power to build up people or pull them down. James makes it clear, out of the attitudes of a person's heart come the words of the tongue.

Read – James Ch 3 v 1 – 12

Discuss – Why do you think it is so easy to tame other animals yet so difficult to tame our own tongues?

Why do you think most people are so good at complaining and criticising, but find it difficult to build up and encourage others?

What do you think is the damage that can be done in a church through the harsh and negative words we use?

James makes it clear that negative and evil words are used by Satan to undermine the unity of the church and provoke division and disunity. His view of the tongue is that if not dedicated to God then the tongue can ruin the person and corrupt their faith.

Read – verses 6, 9 – 12 again

In these verses James is saying that if we are truly born again then we will not use of tongues to criticise and be negative. If we do then it will only be the occasional time and not a habit of life. If our lives are full of the fresh waters of the spirit and not the salt waters of sin then we will use words to build each other up and encourage each other in good deeds.

Discuss – Would you see yourself as a negative , complaining type or someone who is good at building up and encouraging others?

In what ways do you think we can deal with our sometimes negative feelings that we have and deal with them / use them in a more positive way?

What long term things do you think we can do to help us individually deal with negative feelings?

How can we help each other be responsible for the words we use and help each other tame the negative use of the tongue?

Read – James Ch 3 v 13 – 18

In these verses James reveals to us where negative and destructive words come from. Envy, selfishness, ambitious desires produce in us a judgmental view on what others do. James challenges us to be honest with ourselves and recognise what we often mistake for a **better wisdom**, is often no more than a earthly, unspiritual selfishness that comes from the devil. The devil uses these things to develop disharmony and discord with the long term aim to create damaged relationships and disunity. When this happens the body of Christ is unable to witness effectively to Christ and thus unable to fulfil its intended purpose.

Read – Ephesians Ch 4 v 25 – Ch 5 v 2

Discuss – What practical advice are we give in how we conduct our relationship and use our tongues?
How do you think we can develop these things as good habits in our lives?

Practical Ideas – **Make a short list of 5 people** you normally find it difficult to get along with and pray for them all week. Go out of your way to encourage them and see life from their perspective .

Ask someone to watch over you for a few weeks and tell you every time you complain or are negative about someone. It may surprise you the results that are found.