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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

November 12, 2023

Foundations of Faith Week #6 / Pastor Paul Taylor

Master Your Mouth

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. Icebreaker Question | Share a favorite quote or saying that has inspired you and then discuss why it resonates with you.
2. In the third chapter of his letter, James reveals the hypocrisy of the tongue. It's used to both bless God and curse people made in God's image. Read James 3:9-12 before discussing the corresponding questions.

James 3:9-12 (NIV) – ⁹With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹²My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

a) In what way(s) do you relate to James' words?

b) Are there particular people and/or environments that tend to bring out the worst aspects of your speech? Why do you believe that is?

c) James' writing on speech both precedes (James 1:26) and follows (James 3:1-12) his remarks about faith and words (James 2:14-26). How would you summarize his teaching on the connection between faith in God, speech, and actions?

How well do these three areas align in your life? Explain.

DIVING DEEPER

3. Read James 3:3-6 together. Pastor Paul said that our words determine our direction. While this can work out for our good, our words also have the potential to cause immense harm to others and damage our lives.

James 3:3-6 (NIV) – ³When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴Or 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. ⁵Likewise, 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. ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

a) What is it about the nature of words that makes them so powerful?

Proverbs 18:21 (NLT) – The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.

b) Reflect on your knowledge of the Bible's story. How do you see God using words to determine direction and shape people's lives?

c) How have words – whether from God, others, or yourself – positively or negatively impacted your life? If it helps, think of a particular story where words you've spoken or received greatly affected the direction and quality of your life.

4. In the middle of his comments about our speech, James makes a bold statement – “...no human being can tame the tongue” (James 3:8). According to James, our own human efforts will produce little fruit in taming the tongue. It's only by God's grace that we'll experience success in using our words to honor God and bless others.

a) Do you agree with these strong words from James? Why or why not?

b) Where have you most noticeably received God's help in taming your tongue? How has this impacted your life and relationships?

5. Like his half-brother Jesus, James recognized that the quality of our words is deeply connected to the underlying condition of our heart. Read Matthew 12:33-37 before discussing the corresponding questions.

Matthew 12:33-37 (NIV) – ³³“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

a) What do the general quality of your words reveal about your heart? If it helps, think of a specific example within the last week or two of your life.

b) Pastor Paul described putting a filter on what we allow into our hearts. What has or might this look like? How can discerning the Holy Spirit's work in your life (e.g., Galatians 5:13-26) aid you in guarding your heart?

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) – Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

TAKING IT HOME

6. With God's grace and assistance, we can choose to speak words that bring life and blessing – words of affection, love, praise, encouragement, healing, et cetera.
 - a) Where and/or how do you want to grow in allowing your speech to honor God and positively impact others?

 - b) Is there a specific person and/or situation that would benefit from your life-giving words? How can you begin to share these words in the coming weeks?

Ephesians 4:29-5:2 (NIV) – ²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ¹Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

7. What's your biggest takeaway from this week's sermon and our group discussion? How can you put that into action this week?

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. Baptisms – Sunday November 26th | We believe baptism is an integral part of your spiritual journey and necessary as you seek to become a fully engaged follower of Christ. If you've recently decided to follow Jesus or you've been a Christ follower for a while but never gotten baptized, now is the perfect time to take this next step! Learn more and sign up by visiting <https://riverscrossing.com/grow>
2. Serve at Rivers Crossing | One of the marks of a fully engaged follower is their willingness to invest into God's kingdom with their time, talents, and resources. We have opportunities to serve all throughout the week! Find the team that's the right fit for you and partner with us to create an environment for people to become fully engaged followers of Jesus. Learn more at <https://riverscrossing.com/serve-here/>

3. Christmas Eve at Rivers Crossing | Experience the joy of Christmas! Between bright carols, twinkling lights, and falling snow, your kids will love our candlelight service. Most importantly, you'll leave with heartwarming memories and hope for the future.

Mason Service Times	Deer Park Service Times
Friday 12/22 - 7pm	
Saturday 12/23 - 1pm and 3pm	
Sunday 12/24 - 8:45am, 10:15am, 12pm and 11pm*	Sunday 12/24 - 10am

For Christmas Eve, RC Kids programming is provided for kids in Preschool and younger. Kids in Kindergarten and older are invited to attend our services.

**There is no RC Kids programming for the 11pm service at Mason on 12/24.*