

# PILGRIM HOME CHURCH

The smaller groups in our church community are inside our homes where we go deeper, build friendships, and walk out the Christian life with each other.

## HOME CHURCH GUIDE

- + “Breaking the Ice” question (group facilitator)
- + **CHECK-INS:** Introduce, check-in
- + **CARE:** Needs in the group
- + **COMPASSION:** What is the group planning? Are you inviting your neighbours to join in?
- + **GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS** Church-wide, group-only
- + **DIG IN:** Discuss questions as a group
- + **END AND HOMEWORK:** Final questions, prayer huddles for personal requests. Consider breaking into small groups (huddles) of 2-4, by gender, if large enough.

## WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

- + This is the first in the series. We are getting clarity on the problem of destructive, negative, cursing speech.
  - Who in your life has recently (or in the past) been the hardest on you? What did they say or do that you remember as harsh, hurtful, or even hateful?
  - Who or when, that you are aware of, have you been harsh or hurtful with? What were your “triggers” (AKA justifications for your words in the moment)? Note: this requires you getting more real in Home Church than perhaps you have before, take a risk, talk about YOURSELF, not others in this question.
  - When we are negative or harsh, what are we expecting those words to do to the situation? What usually happens in your experience?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Our tongues are wired and trained (by our cultures) for complaint and tearing down others. Yes, if we are smart we will often put it in terms of “feedback, helping, etc.,” but if we are never encouraging to the same persons, it simply becomes one-sided and destructive. If you are never a consistent encourager, no matter how “well-meaning” your intentions are, such “feedback, helping, truth-telling, non-praying ‘prayer requests’, etc.” have the opposite effect (defensiveness, not-really-helping, venting, gossiping etc.). This will not result in stronger relationships and a better church.” Have you experienced this?
- Read James 4:1-3. What are your first impressions (thoughts and feelings)?
- Ken Sande speaks of the progression of an idol on James 4:1-3: “I desire, I demand, I judge, I punish”. When have you done or experienced this?
- James 3:1-12 and Acts 2:1-4 David Nystrom writes: James makes three basic points; (1) Small items, such as the tongue, a rudder, or even one teacher, can and often do control a larger whole, such as the body, a ship, or an entire congregation. (2) One source of evil is hell, the stronghold of Satan. (3) When the tongue is influenced by the forces of hell, the result is severe double-mindedness. This irrationality is seen in that the same tongue may praise God but curse people, who have been made in God’s likeness.
- Why do we want to self-justify instead of looking more carefully at our use of words (or passive silence)?

## PRAYER REQUESTS:

FEBRUARY 9, 2020

# THE POWER OF THE TONGUE ON FIRE

...how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze.

James 3:5b

## Jesus and James (3:1-12) on Revealing Words, Modern Spells, Curses We Cast, and Idols

Our words can express the love/kindness that the Jesus Creed tells us is central to our faith. Thoughts of love lead us to actions that are caring and kind. This is COUNTER-CULTURAL for all of us! In the culture of the world, this is a sign of weakness, even stupidity to some, BUT it is the weak things that God uses to confound the wise through which His Power is experienced and made known. We often speak and think situations into greater health or wear them down through toxic negativity in how we use our tongues. Our words reveal what our idols are and what/whom we love.

## KEY TEXT: James 3:1-12 New English Translation (NET Bible)

The Power of the Tongue

<sup>3</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,[a] because you know that we will be judged more strictly.[b] <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble[c] in many ways. If someone does not stumble[d] in what he says,[e] he is a perfect individual,[f] able to control the entire body as well. <sup>3</sup> And if we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies.[g] <sup>4</sup> Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot’s inclination directs. <sup>5</sup> So too the tongue is a small part of the body,[h] yet it has great pretensions.[i] Think[j] how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents[k] the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It[l] pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence—and is set on fire by hell.[m]

<sup>7</sup> For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature[n] is subdued and has been subdued by humankind.[o] <sup>8</sup> But no human being can subdue the tongue; it is a restless[p] evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless the Lord[q] and Father, and with it we curse people[r] made in God’s image. <sup>10</sup> From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters.[s] <sup>11</sup> A spring does not pour out fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, does it? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters,[t] or a vine produce figs? Neither can a salt water spring produce fresh water.

## A FLURRY OF IMAGES

- Horse and bit
- Ship and rudder
- Tame all kinds of animals - domestication
- Fire
- Fig tree bear olives? Vine bearing figs?
- Salt water, fresh water

"... Most people don't recognize the negativity effect in their relationships. When Roy Baumeister, one of the authors of this piece, asks his students why they think they would be a good partner, they list positive things: being friendly, understanding, good in bed, loyal, smart, funny. These things do make a difference, but what's crucial is avoiding the negative. Being able to hold your tongue rather than say something nasty or spiteful will do much more for your relationship than a good word or deed.

*How Negativity Can Kill a Relationship, John Tierney, Roy F. Baumeister, The Atlantic, January 9, 2020*

Negativity, or a bad attitude, is highly corrosive and destructive and the Bible calls it out. This is not to be confused with prophetic truth-telling.

**FALSE STARTS AND PARTIAL SOLUTIONS** New habits alone are only partial solutions. Yes, "hold your tongue". Yes, replace your curses with encouragement. New habits without the deeper work of confronting your heart, will fail you when you need them most.

**TRANSITION:** The authors of the ancient wisdom inspired by the Spirit of Life and Love, tell us we need to understand our problem better. Let's do that first...

## James 4:1-3

- Continued negativity and destructive speech is a form of cursing, casting a spell.

"We judge others-criticize, nit-pick, nag, attack, condemn - because we literally play God. This is heinous "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you to judge your neighbor?" What are you when you judge? None other than a God wannabe. In this we become like the Devil himself (no surprise that the Devil is mentioned James 3:15 and 4:7). We act exactly like the adversary who seeks to usurp God's throne and who acts as the accuser of the brethren. When you and I fight, our minds become filled with accusations: your wrongs and my rights preoccupy me. We play the self-righteous judge in the mini-kingdoms we establish." (Dave Powlison , 21).

- The Spark
- The Gasoline
- The Fire

*James 3:1-12 and Acts 2:1-4 YOU ARE A FIREPLACE*

**THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS START INSIDE** *Matt 15:10-20*

**FINAL THOUGHT AND NEXT SUNDAY**