

TAMING THE TONGUE

The way we speak reveals a lot about us. In fact, Jesus says, “out of an overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” In other words, what we say and how we say things is a direct reflection of who we are at our core.

Speaking in a way that honors Jesus and bears Christian witness as a disciple is a very challenging thing to do. However difficult, God’s word has much to say about striving to honor Him in our speech.

Read James 3:1-12

Discuss: What does this passage show about the speech of a person who knows Jesus?

Foul language

Honoring Jesus in our speech means abstaining from words that are vulgar and profane. Profane words do not edify people who hear them, and they do not reflect wholesome character. (Ephesians 4:29, Romans 3:13-14)

Discuss: In a culture where profane speech is normalized, why is wholesome speech a witness to godly character?

Inappropriate joking

Honoring Jesus in our speech means not making light of unrighteousness. We should not joke about sexual sin, hateful acts against another person, belittling human dignity, or anything else that causes people to have a lack of reverence for God’s design. (Ephesians 5:4, Ps. 19:14)

Discuss: What are some examples of inappropriate joking?

Lying

Honoring Jesus in our speech means not lying to people and using deception to get what we want. Scripture says that God cannot lie, and so if we are to be imitators of Him, we should strive to tell the truth. (Ex. 20:16, Proverbs 12:22, John 8:44)

Read Ephesians 4:25

Discuss: In what circumstances is it difficult to tell the truth?

Why must we strive to do so anyways?

Abusive speech and hateful tone

Honoring Jesus in our speech means not using our words to tear people down. There is much power in our words, they can be used to hurt people in significant ways. We must strive to be loving in what we say to people and about people. Even when we are saying things that are true, we can say them without malice or rudeness. (Colossians 3:8, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 15:4)

Personal Application

Where do you most commonly fall short in honoring Jesus with your speech?

What changes could you make to the environments that impact your speech?

How can you use God's word to help transform how you speak to and about others?