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# PART 1:

*Quick to Listen*

## VIDEO RECAP

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be \_\_\_\_\_ to listen, \_\_\_\_\_ to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

(James 1:19-21)

Be **curious**.

Ask **three** questions.

**Angry:** drawing hasty, misinformed, relationally destructive conclusions

Everything everyone \_\_\_\_\_ makes sense to them.

Everything everyone \_\_\_\_\_ makes sense to them.

Everything everyone \_\_\_\_\_ makes sense to them.

“**I don’t know** why they would **do** that...**say** that...**believe** that...”

### HABIT 5:

Seek **first** to understand, then to be **understood**.

—Stephen Covey

*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

### MY RIGHTNESS

I know I’m right.

I want **you** to know I’m right.

I want **everybody** to know I’m right.

If the two of you aren’t **right**, it doesn’t matter who’s **right**.

#### Answer Key for Blanks

quick	does	believes
slow	says	

Familiarize yourself with James 1:19–21 before your meeting. Think about how this passage on listening and doing applies to your life and to your own opportunities for growth in these areas.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 James tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. When we're in conflict, most of us are quick to do something, but it's usually not to listen. How would you fill in these blanks?

In conflict, I'm often quick to \_\_\_\_\_  
and slow to \_\_\_\_\_.

- 2 Where or when is it hardest for you to be quick to listen and slow to speak? Why?

- At work
- At home
- Online/on social media
- With my (circle one) parents, children, friends, siblings, co-workers
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Can you remember a time when someone was quick to listen to you—your opinion or point of view? How did it change the course of your conversation?

- 4 "If the two of you aren't right, it doesn't matter who's right."

How does this statement change the way you might interact in the future with someone who believes differently than you?

*(For example: an in-law with opposing political views or a colleague of a different faith)*

- 5 Can you think of anyone you've been trying to be *right at* instead of *right with*? What step can you take this week to put your relationship before your righteousness (or "rightness")?

### QUESTION 1

This question will start the conversation going by helping your group members think through how well they listen. Pay attention to their answers.

### QUESTION 2

Don't rush through this question. It can set the stage for deeper discussion in the questions that follow. Here are some possible follow-up questions to help you and your group think about your patterns of behavior: Why is it more difficult for you to listen in some environments (e.g., home, work, or online)? When you think about the group of people you're least patient with, what is it about them that tempts you to be slow to listen and quick to speak?

### QUESTION 3

Give your group members some time to process this question. Be comfortable with a little silence, but also be ready with your own concrete example. The more specific you are, the more it will encourage your group members to be specific.

### QUESTION 4

It's possible that a group member will resist this idea because some people place a high value on truth. That's okay. It's not your job to change anyone's mind or to argue a case. Consider asking follow-up questions such as: What do you think might happen if you prioritized your relationship with someone over being right (even when you know your right and they are wrong)? What do you think might happen if you put your opinion on hold for a few minutes and asked the other person questions in order to better understand their perspective?

### QUESTION 5

Give your group space to think and answer. Be ready with an example of your own. Make sure you have a specific person in mind, and that you've figured out a next step you can follow through on. Ask the group to hold you accountable. This will lead your group members to do the same.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Don't settle for being right. *Make things right.* That's what your heavenly Father did for you through Jesus. People who were nothing like him liked him. Why? Not because he demanded to be right all the time (even though he could have). People liked Jesus because they felt he understood them.

Who are you trying to be *right at* instead of *right with*? What can you do to try to understand their point of view?

## PRAYER

God, help me be curious about what others do, say, and believe. I want to begin asking questions before drawing conclusions. Help me make things right instead of trying to be right.

**DON'T *settle*  
FOR BEING RIGHT;  
*make* THINGS  
RIGHT.**

You don't have to say this prayer word for word. It's here to give you ideas.

# PART 2:

*Untamable*

## VIDEO RECAP

We **all** stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they **say** is **perfect**, able to keep their whole body in **check**. When we put **bits** into the **mouths** of horses to make them **obey** us, we can turn the **whole animal**. Or take **ships** as an example. Although they are so **large** and are driven by **strong winds**, they are steered by a **very** \_\_\_\_\_ **rudder** wherever the pilot wants to go.

(James 3:2-4)

Small **part/Big** influence

Likewise, 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**. The 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...

(James 3:5-6)

We \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves with more **words**.

If you start a fire **accidentally**, you are still **responsible** for the fire you started.

...and is itself set on fire by **hell**. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being **tamed** and have been **tamed** by mankind, but no human being **can** tame the tongue. It is a **restless** evil, full of deadly **poison**. With the tongue we **praise** our Lord and Father, and with it we **curse** human beings, who have been **made in God's likeness**. Out of the same mouth come **praise** and **cursing**. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both **fresh** water and **salt** water flow from the **same** spring? My brothers and sisters, can a **fig** tree bear **olives**, or a **grapevine** bear **figs**? Neither can a **salt** spring produce fresh water.

(James 3:6-12)

There is \_\_\_\_\_ once-and-for-all **solution**.

What do we **do**?

Remember / Surrender / Confess

Heavenly Father, remind me to be **quick** to listen and **slow** to speak.

### Answer Key for Blanks

small            no  
defend

To prepare for this session, read James 3:1-12 ahead of time and effect on ways you need to tame your tongue. It will help you lead from a place of authenticity.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 James used the metaphor of a small spark starting a great forest fire to illustrate the power of our tongues. Share some examples of people who have started “forest fires” with their words. What kind of damage did they do?
- 2 Who has significantly impacted your life with their words? Were the words that shaped you positive or negative?
- 3 In which relationship do you most often find yourself losing control of your mouth? Have you faced any relational consequences as a result?
- 4 In the message, Andy said that with your tongue, “There is constant potential for great good and constant potential for great evil.”

Take a few minutes to complete these questions on your own.

- Read through the list of positive statements on page 15 and circle the three that would most lift you up if someone said them to you.

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| You're fun to be around.          | I'm lucky to know you.                  |
| You make me laugh.                | I'm glad you're in my life.             |
| I was thinking about you earlier. | I missed you.                           |
| You're a great leader.            | You're so talented.                     |
| You're smart.                     | I appreciate how supportive you are.    |
| You mean the world to me.         | I'm impressed by your hard work.        |
| You look great.                   | I wish I were as empathetic as you.     |
| You always put others first.      | I respect you.                          |
| You brighten my day.              | You're so creative.                     |
| You're a great listener.          | I know you can do it.                   |
| I trust you.                      | I'm proud of you.                       |
| Your opinion is valuable.         | You're the most generous person I know. |

- Underline any of the statements you've said to someone recently.
- Who might need to hear one (or more) of these encouraging statements from you?
- If you feel comfortable, share one of your takeaways from this session with the group.

- 5 Your tongue may be untamable, but there are three things you can do to gain some control over it.

- **Remember:** Recognize that your words are powerful.
- **Surrender:** Ask God to help you be quick to listen and slow to speak.
- **Confess:** Don't explain or excuse, but own the fires you start.

Which one is the easiest for you to do? Which is the hardest?

### QUESTION 1

This questions is designed as an icebreaker. It allows your group to consider the bottom line of the message through the lens of other people's behavior. It's possible someone will share an example from their own life. If that happens, thank the person for sharing something personal. It's important to encourage vulnerability in group every chance you get.

### QUESTION 2

If possible, let your group members answer first. It's a good idea to be ready with a couple of your own examples. If most people answer with positive examples, you may want to offer a negative one just to broaden the discussion. Or you may want to share a positive example if most people give negative ones.

### QUESTION 3

This may be a sensitive subject for some group members. Remember to thank people for sharing—especially if doing so requires vulnerability. Be ready with your own answer, and don't hesitate to share an example that's difficult to talk about. Being the group's leader isn't about being a “perfect Christian.” The more you open up about your weaknesses and struggles, the more your group members will do the same.

### QUESTION 4

Give your group a few minutes to complete this exercise. Don't pressure anyone to share their answers, but be ready to share yours. It will encourage others to do the same.

### QUESTION 5

Here's a potential follow-up question: What's one way you can get better at doing the thing that's hardest for you?

## **THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...**

We are powerful because our words are powerful. Our mouths have more destructive power than any other part of the body. The good news is that we also have the power to avoid the consequences of an untamed tongue if we choose to take James's wisdom to heart and surrender this powerful tool to God. Take time this week to pray:

**“Heavenly Father, remind me to be quick to listen and slow to speak.”**

## **PRAYER**

God, I know what it's like to be lifted up by other people's positive words. And I know what it's like to be hurt by other people's negative words. Help me be quick to listen and slow to speak so I can build others up instead of tearing them down.

**IF YOU**  
*accidentally* **START A**  
**FIRE WITH YOUR WORDS,**  
**YOU ARE** *still* **RESPONSIBLE**  
**FOR THE FIRE** *you*  
**ACCIDENTALLY STARTED.**

# PART 3:

According to Code

## VIDEO RECAP

<sup>17</sup>So I tell you this, and **insist** on it in the Lord, that you must no longer **live** as the **Gentiles** do, in the **futility** of their **thinking**. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God **because** of the **ignorance** that is in them due to the **hardening** of their hearts. <sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have **given themselves over** to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of **impurity**, and they are full of **greed**.

<sup>20</sup>That, however, is not the **way of life** you **learned** <sup>21</sup>when you heard about **Christ** and were **taught** in him in accordance with the **truth** that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your **former** way of life, to put off your **old self**, which is being corrupted by its **deceitful desires**; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the **attitude** of your **minds**; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the **new self**, created to **be like God** in true **righteousness** and **holiness**.

<sup>29</sup>Do not let any \_\_\_\_\_ talk come out of your mouths, but only **what is** \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ others up according to **their needs**, that it may **benefit** those who listen.

<sup>30</sup>And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God. <sup>31</sup>**Get rid** of all **bitterness, rage** and anger, **brawling** and **slander**, along with every form of **malice**. <sup>32</sup>**Be kind** and **compassionate** to one another, **forgiving** each other **just as** in Christ **God** forgave **you**.

(Ephesians 4:17-24, 29-32)

Avoid \_\_\_\_\_ **mouth**.

We avoid **fish mouth** by **guarding** our mouths.

Bitterness **requires** forgiveness—*giving someone from the **past** what they **don't** deserve so we can give those around us what they **do** deserve.*

Get rid of words that:

- Demean.
- Degrade.
- Disrespect.

Do **for others** what God in Christ has done **for you**.

**Speak** unto **others** as God in Christ has **spoken** over **you**.

### Answer Key for Blanks

unwholesome	building
helpful	fish

To prepare for this session, give yourself time to read James 4:17-32 a few times throughout the week. How intentional are you about the words that come out of your mouth? What steps can you take to become more intentional about honoring others with your words?

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

1 Who has been a “builder” with their words in your life? How did they influence you?

2 Ephesians 4:29 tells us to say “only what is helpful for building others up.” Andy commented that “the apostle Paul’s point is not *be nice*. It’s *be helpful*.”

- When has someone said something to you that was helpful, even if it didn’t feel good to hear it?
- Was there something about the way they said it that made it easy (or hard) to hear?

3 Using words to build others up doesn’t always come naturally. If you sometimes struggle with this, what are some of the reasons?

- Pride
- Jealousy
- Self-righteousness
- Past hurt
- Not knowing how to do it
- Weariness
- Anger or bitterness
- Apathy
- Fear
- Not wanting to share/lose the attention
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4 In the message, Andy said, “You can’t be a builder if you’re bitter.”

Take a few minutes to answer these questions on your own. Then continue your group conversation using the question at the bottom of the exercise.

- What words spoken to you, about you, or over you have left you with a dose of bitterness it may be time to get rid of?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Write specific names on the blank lines in this definition of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is giving someone from the past, \_\_\_\_\_, what they  
(for example: my dad)

don’t deserve so I can give those around me, \_\_\_\_\_, what they  
(for example: my children)

do deserve.

If you feel comfortable, share some of your notes with the group. What can we do to support you in this step of forgiveness?

### QUESTION 1

The purpose of this question is to get people thinking in practical terms about what it would look like for them to build others up with their words.

### QUESTION 2

This question may take some thought. If a group member jumps in with an answer, that’s great. But you make want to avoid an uncomfortable silence by having an example of your own. Don’t dominate the conversation; use your example to help others think of a person that gave them constructive feedback.

### QUESTION 3

Be ready to dig into this question. It may take some discussion before people are able to identify the reason they struggle. For example, it may not be clear to someone that a past hurt is what makes it difficult for them to build others up. That may only become apparent as they talk about their emotions and behaviors.

### QUESTION 4

Don’t pressure anyone to share their answers. Instead, lead the way by sharing yours. They’ll probably follow.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Guard your mouth. Don't destroy others with your words. Build them up. If you find that difficult to do, maybe there's someone from your past you need to forgive.

Consider spending some time this week memorizing part of Ephesians 4:29:

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up.*

## PRAYER

God, thank you for the way you love me. I want to reflect that love to the people around me, but my emotions sometimes get in the way. Help me forgive the people that have hurt me in the past so I can build up the people in my life right now.

**DO NOT LET ANY**  
*unwholesome* **TALK**  
**COME OUT** *of* **YOUR**  
**MOUTHS, BUT ONLY WHAT**  
*is helpful* **FOR BUILDING**  
**OTHERS UP.**

EPHESIANS 4:29

You may want to encourage your group members to write the verse on a notecard and work on memorizing it over the next week. You can do the same.

# PART 4:

*Right Where You Want 'Em*

## VIDEO RECAP

### JOSEPH'S STORY

- Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob (Genesis 37:3).
- Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave to a band of Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:25-27).
- Joseph was placed in charge of Potiphar's household and had success (Genesis 39:1-6).
- Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph, and he was thrown in prison (Genesis 39:7-20).

**Bad things have been happening to good people for a long time.**

- While he was in prison, Joseph interpreted the dreams of a cupbearer and baker (Genesis 40:5-23).
- Joseph was called from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41:1-36).

- Joseph was placed in charge of Pharaoh's palace and grain storage (Genesis 41:37-43).
- Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt for grain during a famine (Genesis 42:1-5).
- While Joseph's brothers were in Egypt for grain during a famine, Joseph recognized them but kept his identity hidden (Genesis 42:6-8).

**What do you do when you've got the power and your words determine the destiny of your enemy?**

- After some time, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers (Genesis 45:1-7).
- Joseph offered them food and shelter in Egypt (Genesis 45:9-11).
- Joseph's brothers were nervous after the death of their father (Genesis 50:18-21).

Prepare for the last session of this study by spending the week reading Joseph's story in Genesis 37-50.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 When you think about your ancestry, who in your family tree made a decision (for better or for worse) that has affected you?
- 2 What's the difference between justice and revenge? What makes revenge so appealing?
- 3 Have you or someone you know ever had a season of life when it felt like God had gone silent? With the perspective of time, can you see how God was working all along?
- 4 What are some practical things you can do to live like God is with you during seasons when it feels like he's not?
- 5 Have you ever ended up with power over someone who previously mistreated you? How did you respond? Do you wish you had responded differently?

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- 6 When you have the power to determine the destiny of someone who has wronged you, your words will be stones you throw or stones you use to pave the way forward.
  - Talk about the legacy you want to leave if you ever find yourself with that kind of power.
  - What can you do now that will help you respond with words that pave the way forward?

### QUESTION 1

Don't steer this question. Allow the group to take it where they want it to go. It may be a light icebreaker that lets you know a little about each person's family history, or it may be a more serious (and possibly negative) discussion about family legacies. Either is okay.

### QUESTIONS 2

Look up "justice" and "revenge" in a dictionary. You don't have to share the definitions with the group, but having them fresh in your mind will help you lead the discussion well.

### QUESTION 3

This question allows group members to talk about someone else's experiences or go a little deeper by talking about their own. If you want the conversation to go deeper, be ready to share a personal experience of your own. If you share, they're more likely to do the same.

### QUESTION 4

Treat this like a brainstorming session by coming up with as many ideas as you can. Don't worry or judge if some of the ideas are questionable or biblically unsound. Just gather as many as you can think of and talk a little about things you've done in the past that have worked well.

### QUESTION 5

Listen. Thank group members for sharing. If someone reveals behavior they're no ashamed of, don't judge them.

### QUESTION 6

Be ready with answers of your own. Make sure they're specific—especially when it comes to what you can do now that will help you respond with words that pave the way forward. The more specific you are with your practical application, the more specific your group members will be. And specific applications are much more likely to help us grow.

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## **THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...**

Bad things have been happening to good people for a long time. And God has been with those good people in those bad times. You will never experience the good that comes from the bad unless you recognize that God was with you during the bad and then refuse to play God when things are good.

## **PRAYER**

God, in times of trouble, help me trust that you are with me. I want that kind of trust to grow into a strong foundation for our relationship. And I pray that it will make me kinder and more loving to other people...even those who wrong me.

*You* **WILL NEVER**  
**EXPERIENCE THE** *good*  
**THAT COMES FROM THE**  
**BAD** *unless YOU*  
**RECOGNIZE** *that God*  
*was with you*  
**IN THE BAD.**

