

## Open Windows II – The Tongue (Temptations Series – Part III)

8/16/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. Words can be powerful. Read Proverbs 30:5-6 and compare the words of God with our words.

God says what he means and means what he says. Every word He passes on to us is carefully chosen and purposeful.

We, on the other hand, have a tendency to use words for manipulation, or just to cover up ignorance or mistakes.

2. Can you think of some examples of specific passages in the Bible in which words are clearly demonstrated to have incredible power?

Gen. 1:1-3 - The entire Creation was spoken into existence

John 1:1-4, 14 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . .

Prov. 25:11 – “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.”

3. Pastor Steve starts out with an analogy in which the tongue is compared to the bit in a horse’s mouth or the rudder on a ship. How is the tongue similar to both of those objects and how is it different?

In all three cases the object (bit, rudder, or tongue) is relatively small compared to the entity that possesses it, however they all affect what happens in a way disproportionately large compared to their size.

However, the tongue tends to be more of a revealer of the direction we are headed rather than a determiner or controller. A bad choice of words can certainly get us into trouble, but our thoughts and actions probably were already heading us in that direction anyway. Our words reflect what is already going on in our minds.

4. These illustrations are discussed in the Bible passage for today, James 3:1-12. Read these verses and reflect on their tone.

It seems a bit hopeless. It seems like we just naturally have both good and bad coming out of our mouths (blessings and curses). Thus, maybe we should just all remain silent

for the rest of our lives. However, even that isn't enough, since we still might not have a pure heart (v. 11 -12 – the source of our words must be pure).

5. Two illustrations were given in the sermon as to the power of the tongue. Describe each:

a) The tongue can shape the course of destiny. We can establish ideas and determine the type of performance we will get based on our ability to find the right words at the right time. People listening to us are assessing us based on the language we use. If we sound like we know what we are doing and have some expertise, they are more likely to give our words credibility.

b) Words can inflame passions. Although words are tiny things, they are like a spark that can start a fire (James 3:5). That can be a good thing (starting a campfire so a meal can be prepared) or a bad thing (starting a forest fire that destroys a beautiful forest). Similarly, words can be incredibly helpful (a comment of assurance before a big task) or unpredictably hurtful (a slanderous comment made in anger).

6. Pastor Steve then moved to the window mounted on the platform and talked about each of the two panes in different terms. How are they different?

a. The upper pane of the window represents when people mean more than they say (malignant comments that have much hidden meaning behind the few words spoken). Examples would be Freudian slips, satire, sarcasm, vulgarity, and dirty stories. We need to make sure we don't bottle up our thoughts and feelings until they come spurting out in inappropriate comments that clearly have a lot of baggage hanging on them.

b. The lower pane of the window represents when people say more than they mean (words just flow out, whether they have any significance or not). Examples would be flippant rebuttals to serious comments, generalizations, teasing, jesting, and profanity. We need to remind ourselves of the power of words (described above) and then choose our words more carefully. .

7. Both panes in our lives require restraint. Four tactics were described for getting our tongue under control. What were they?

a) Take this seriously. (see James 1:26) You are known to a large extent by your words as well as your actions. One cannot be a good Christian witness if our language is vulgar, flippant, or negative.

b) Push the [Pause] button. Be quick to listen and slow to speak (& slow to show anger). Be careful with all the ways in which we can communicate rapidly these days (email,

blogs, Facebook, Twitter). They are all opportunities to stir up bad feelings with poorly chosen words sent out in haste. Being a good listener will automatically help control your tongue.

c) Get help from the body of Christ. Confess your sins, one to another; emphasize the positive in each other, and be careful of your tone of voice at all times. Ask others to comment on how they perceive things you have said.

d) Use the mouth to build one another up. (see Ephesians 4:29) Try to use your words to be helpful. Rather than acting out of fear or discouragement, act out of love.

8) As was the case in the previous message on Desire, a key is getting right with God. If we get our heart fixed such that our #1 priority is serving God, then the tongue should reflect that (in the same way that our words will make it known when we are hurting inside). Think of one specific action that you can take that will start you down the road toward using your tongue in a Christ-like manner.

Obviously, this could take lots of different directions, but the key is to have something concrete come out of the discussion that will be a first step in the right direction. One option would be for each person in the group to think of one positive thing to say about each other person in the group (if you are small) or the person to their right (if you are larger). To the extent that your group is relatively new and doesn't know each other very well, this would be a chance to get acquainted for a few minutes first before undertaking the time of sharing.