



conversation peace

THE POWER OF TRANSFORMED SPEECH



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ABOUT THIS STUDY

Do you want to experience the power of transformed speech?

Conversation Peace is an interactive Bible study that includes challenging discussion for small groups. The member workbook provides six weeks of daily, individual study materials for use between sessions.



DAILY LESSONS

The daily lessons, to be completed on your own, should take no more than 20 minutes. Each week's lessons will help you harness the power of a speech-transforming element: the power of navigation, power of cause and effect, power of exchange, power of the open gate, the power of construction, power of instruction, and power of return.



TONGUE TONIC

According to the dictionary, [ton•ic] ton´ik, [Gr. *tonikos*] describes a solution that maintains, increases, or restores the health of the system or organ. The Tongue Tonics explored in this study contain practical concepts and skills to help increase or restore the health of your speech. Whenever you see the symbol, stop and take a dose.



WORD FROM THE WORD

Each Word from the Word defines, explains, and helps you understand how to apply certain words from the Bible. God's Words will stimulate you to think about the way you use words. Study each Word from the Word and watch your vocabulary grow strong and healthy!



QUIPS AND QUOTES

A lot of noted historical and religious persons have said good things about how to use our mouths. Profound, witty, and wise, Quips and Quotes are sure to inspire and challenge you.



BREATH FRESHENER

Freshen your breath by memorizing the Scripture verse for the week. Cut-out cards are available at www.lifeway.com/conversationpeace so you can tuck Breath Fresheners into your purse or pocket.

WEEK 1

THE POWER OF NAVIGATION



“For ‘whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.’”

1 PETER 3:10-11, ESV



Where do you want to sail today?

The Greek ferry was on autopilot. Captains are required to man the bridge for the last seven miles approaching port, but he had sailed this route six to eight times a week without incident. Confident of the autopilot settings, the captain took a nap while the first officer and crew left the bridge to watch a soccer match on television. No one noticed when strong undercurrents caused the *MS Express Samina* to drift off course.

Two miles from its destination, the vessel struck a rocky islet and sank. The islet was clearly marked with a light beacon; no attentive seaman would have missed it. But the captain was sleeping, unaware that his autopilot was steering the ship toward disaster. Eighty-two lives, mostly tourists, were lost.

The *Express Samina* was shipwrecked en route to the beautiful Aegean island of Paros. The travelers' exciting and promising vacation ended in unspeakable tragedy and loss. The captain and crew were charged with murder, neglect of duty, and violation of maritime procedures. The disaster was one of the worst nautical accidents in Greece's history.

How foolish of that captain to abandon the helm and neglect the wheel of his vessel. And yet that's precisely what we do when we put our minds and mouths on autopilot and fail to pay attention to the words coming out.

Do you realize that your tongue is a steering mechanism? James 3:4 likens it to the rudder of a ship. Your tongue navigates your ship.

The word *navigate* comes from the Latin words *navis*, meaning *ship* and *agere*, *to drive*. To navigate is to plan, steer, and manage one's movement and course. The apostle James notes that though ships are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. If a ship is not directed, it will be at the mercy of the wind and currents and will be lost or shattered on the rocks.

Do you want your relationships to move in a good direction? To experience the power and blessing of transformed speech?

Where you sail today
depends on what
you say today.

By properly steering your tongue, you will be better able to avoid disaster and direct your life along the right course. And, in the process of harnessing the power of navigation, you'll go to all sorts of beautiful and fascinating places.



DAY ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE RUDDER

The tongue is our principal steering mechanism.

“So also the tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. A great forest can be set on fire by one tiny spark. And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness, and poisons every part of the body ... and can turn our whole lives into a blazing flame of destruction and disaster.”

JAMES 3:5-6, THE LIVING BIBLE

I remember the summer my youngest son made his maiden voyage as captain of the fishing boat. This rite of passage happens at about the twelfth year for every Kassian. As instructed, the new captain displays his skill by taking five or six passes close to the shoreline bordering the cabin. Dad, Mom, Grandma, Grandpa, aunts, uncles, siblings, and other spectators in the vicinity shout and cheer. Camcorders whir. Shutters snap. iPhones upload to Instagram.

The highlight of the demonstration occurs when the captain navigates the boat around in a broad circle and pulls back in along the pier. Victoriously, he turns off the motor, docks the boat, and runs ashore to receive his accolades. Passing this test earns him the right to take the small boat out by himself to go fishing in front of the cabin.

Steering a boat is based on a relatively simple concept: the principle of unequal water pressures. When a rudder is turned so that one side is more exposed to the force of the water, the stern (back) of the boat rotates toward the side of the rudder where the water pressure is less.

In small craft the rudder is connected to a handle called a tiller and turned manually. In larger vessels, it is turned by hydraulic, steam, or electrical machinery. In all cases, the rudder is relatively small but is responsible for setting the direction of the entire vessel.

This week we'll study the first element of transformed speech—the Power of Navigation. Just like a rudder, we'll see how our tongues turn our lives in the direction we will go.

Read James 3:2-6. Note the illustrations James uses for the tongue (vv. 3-4): a bit in a horse's mouth and a rudder for a ship. Describe what might happen depending on how each object is used.

| OBJECT | USED INCORRECTLY | USED CORRECTLY |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Bit in horse's mouth | | |
| Rudder of a ship | | |

In what ways do these illustrations reflect the situation with our tongues?

James wants us to realize that our tongues are our principal steering mechanism. What we talk is where we'll walk. If we use our tongues for good, we will head in the right direction. Conversely, if we use our tongues for evil, we will steer our ship toward destruction.

THE TONGUE IS A SPARK OF FIRE

In James 3:6, James compares the tongue to a spark of fire that burns down an entire forest. According to James, the tongue sets the whole course of a person's life on fire. In the American Standard Version of the Bible, the phrase "whole course" is translated as "the cycle of nature." The Greek word is *trochos*, which means *genesis* or *beginning*. By using this word, James implied that the tongue is the hub—the beginning—of "the whole round of human life and activity."¹

Below or in the margin, record the first names of some of your family members, friends, coworkers, or neighbors.

Your tongue affects all the relationships you recorded! It is the hub that impacts the whole, complete, or entire circle of your life.

If the hub of a wheel is on fire, the fire can quickly burn in all directions down the spokes to the rim of the wheel. From the burning hub, the entire wheel can be engulfed in flames. James's point is that our tongues play a central, "hub-like" role in our lives. A small spark of evil on our tongue has the capacity to destroy our relationships and even our whole lives.

Sparks remind me of what happened to my older brother, David, who was trying to light a coal barbecue. He tried repeatedly but it wouldn't light. As a final resort, he decided to use gasoline. He did not know that a spark too small to see had, in fact, taken hold in the coals. It didn't let off any noticeable smoke or heat but when David poured gasoline on the coals, the whole barbecue exploded. His burns, to more than 70 percent of his body, were life threatening. Thankfully, by the grace of God, he recovered. But he had to endure excruciating pain and months of rehabilitation.

Not many of you have experienced the pain of badly burned flesh, but many of you have experienced the pain of badly burned relationships. Life has poured gasoline on your coals. The sparks hidden in your tongue and in the tongues of your loved ones have exploded into a destructive fire. The pain—and the rehabilitation—will be lengthy.

STEER IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

How we choose to use our tongues—for good or for evil—affects our entire life. Its use affects the type of person we become and the type of experiences we have.

Read Proverbs 12:5-8,13-22. In the appropriate space, summarize the characteristics and life experiences of those who use their tongues for evil (wickedness) and those who use their tongues for good (righteousness).

| USE TONGUES FOR EVIL | USE TONGUES FOR GOOD |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| | |

Our Breath Freshener for the week (see p. 6) sums up two benefits of controlling our tongues. What are they?

Benefit 1:

Benefit 2:

Like a rudder, our tongues set the direction for our lives. Using them in the right way will bring us blessing. We will love life and see good days.



A word is dead when it is said, some say. I say it just begins to live that day.

—EMILY DICKINSON

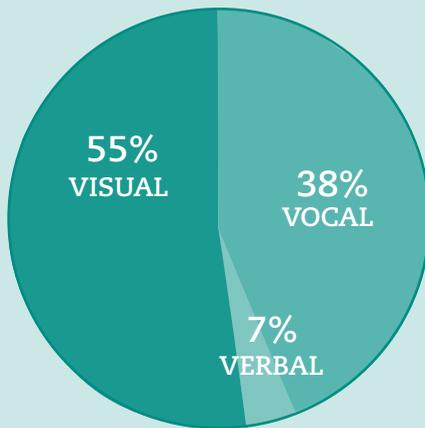
How do you begin to steer your vessel in the right direction? Our Breath Freshener provides a clue: “turn from evil and do good; ... seek peace and pursue it.” To pursue means to chase after. A pursuit requires time, energy, and commitment. Turning, or changing, our words from evil to good also requires time, energy, and commitment. Above all, it requires study to find out what God has to say about how to use our mouths and to ask Him to help us use them in the right way.

Close today’s lesson by praying through and personalizing this week’s Breath Freshener. And don’t forget to take today’s dose of Tongue Tonic, which explains the three parts of a message.



Three Parts of a Message

When we interact with others, the messages we send are made up of three parts: (1) verbal—the words we speak; (2) vocal—the tone of our voice; and (3) visual—our body language.



VERBAL: We express our thoughts with words. Those words can be precise or imprecise, accusing (“You are...”), intense or mild (furious vs. annoyed), vague (“sort of”), pleading or demanding.²

Although words are invaluable in articulating our thoughts and ideas, research indicates that in personal interaction, words only contribute 7 percent to the overall message.

VOCAL: More important than the words we speak is the tone of voice we use. Our voices are incredibly

versatile. We can emphasize certain words; clip, force, or soften words; speak in a lilting, sing-songy, mimicking, or sneering tone; speak rapidly or slowly; over- or under-articulate, raise or lower the volume; and/or change the pitch. The possibilities are endless.

Tone of voice contributes 38 percent to the overall message.

VISUAL: Body language is the final, and most important, part of interpersonal interaction. Again, the possibilities are endless. Consider how these visual cues affect the message: roll eyes, shake, or tilt head, shrug shoulders, frown, purse lips, squint, raise eyebrows, furrow brow, cross arms, glare, sneer, lack of eye contact, rapid blink, glance side to side, point finger, exaggerate arm/hand gestures, tap fingers.

Visual cues contribute 55 percent to the overall message.

All three parts of a message must align and be consistent for the message to be believed. For example, if you say you accept someone, but you say it with a tense voice and crossed arms, chances are he or she won’t believe you. For the message to be clear, all three parts must “say” the same thing.

WEEK 1

Group Time: Talk It Out

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

In order to harness the Power of Navigation, you must step up to the helm. Your challenge is to accept responsibility for what you say and how you say it—to be attentive and intentional about the way you communicate.

The waters you encounter may be choppy. Another person's angry, harsh, or hurtful words may put sharp rocks in your way. But how you respond is up to you. You control the rudder. You are responsible for YOU!

Think about these questions and discuss them with your spouse, family, friends, and/or small group:

- 1. What sort of circumstances trigger you to go “off course” with your speech?**
- 2. With which person(s) do you experience the greatest communication challenges? Why?**
- 3. Would the person you identified say you are more focused on getting your point across or on understanding the speaker? If asked to evaluate your listening and communication habits, what would he or she would say about you?**
- 4. How often do you blame difficult people or circumstances for your sub-par speech? Why is this an unhelpful thing to do?**
- 5. Identify some ways your personality, feelings, attitudes, assumptions, habits, or past experiences might negatively affect the way you communicate.**



