



THE UNITY COURSE

SESSION 4

WRITING AND SPEAKING

Taming the tongue

1 > Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You call us to know your Father,
And be sanctified by your truth.
As we consider the reality of disagreement
And the call to live in loving unity,
Help us to work for that complete unity
Through which you say the world will know you.
Give us grace as we face moments of difficulty;
Remind us to hope that no situation is beyond your love;
And inspire our words through the work of your Holy Spirit.
In your name we pray,
Amen.

2 > Video track

Watch the video and discuss your response

OR

Book-group track

Review chapters 4 and 9 of Loving Disagreement



3 > Some suggested questions to prompt discussion

Within the book, a scenario concerning disagreement about new chairs in church is considered at various points. Chapter 4 begins with the following (imagined) email: 'I simply don't know how we can call ourselves Christians and even consider wasting thousands of pounds replacing perfectly adequate chairs, while our foodbank shelves need re-stocking to feed the poor. This situation is a disgrace and I am ashamed to be part of this church. I am not alone in feeling this, and rest assured that I and several others will be expressing our views in full this evening.'

How might the author of this email 'tamed their tongue'? And is it possible to do this while still expressing their legitimate views?

Paul warns against 'morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words'. How easy is it to resist the temptation to get sucked into controversial arguments rather than seeking to build unity and peace?

When writing (including on social media) and speaking, in what kinds of situation is it most difficult to tame the tongue and show love, rather than responding quickly with anger?

4 > Bible Study

James 3:1-18

To what extent is James right to highlight the power of the tongue to bring destruction in relationships?

Is it possible to 'tame the tongue'?

What is appealing in verse 17 as a picture of how Christians might face their inevitable disagreements? And what feels most difficult actually to live out, from that list of qualities?

To what extent do we think of being a 'peacemaker' as a central element in the Christian life?

5 > Personal reflection

This is an opportunity to reflect before God on the way in which you personally use words in your relationships with others.

There will be good things to celebrate; but this is a particular opportunity to consider when our tongues get out of control and we say things we later regret.

Perhaps there is a particular disagreement which you want to consider with God in prayer; it can be helpful to consider something which remains unresolved, or where you know that some anger or resentment still sits within you.

Consider if there are specific aspects of the way you faced this situation which fell short, and confess them to God.

You might wish to pray these verses from Psalm 139:

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Ask that by the power of his Spirit he would heal wounds and restore your sense of hope.

6 > An opportunity to share

Members of the group may wish to share something of their own personal reflection at this point.

Questions prompting discussion along these lines may be helpful:

How has this session prompted me to reflect on the ways I use social media, or speak with friends?

What kind of ways do I hope to 'tame' my tongue?

What does it mean for me to live as a peacemaker?



7 > Closing Prayer

The group may like to pray openly together, and/or have a time of confession; the Chemin Neuf community prayer for unity can be used:

Lord Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one,
we pray to you for the unity of Christians,
according to your will,
according to your means.
May your Spirit enable us
to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin
and to hope beyond all hope.
Amen.

