

## **James #6 - How does faith work when you speak your mind?**

- Howdy, we're in a great book of the Bible called James. If you've got a Bible, go to James 3, and the book is written by Jesus' little brother. Imagine being the guy who shared a bunk bed with the Lord. And so he saw Jesus grow up, live, die on the cross, rise, return to heaven, and he went right into ministry, telling everybody about his big brother, Jesus. And what I like to say is that James is the blue-collar scholar of the New Testament. He didn't go to a university, he wasn't formally trained in some big institution, but with Jesus being his big brother and Mary and Joseph being his mom and dad, he had a lot of deep insight. But for him, Christianity is really about practical life. What do you do? So the theme for our series is "Faith Works". How do you take your faith and put it to work in the normal daily things of life? And so today's question is: how does faith work when you wanna speak your mind? Now I know not you people 'cause you're all emotionally healthy and filled with the spirit, you never get frustrated, agitated, or angry, but just think of some people that maybe are not that good at holding their tongue. As I think about it, I know a guy like that, who sometimes gets a little frustrated and a little emotional, a little angry, a little agitated, "You know what, I've just got to get this off my chest. "I've got to let them know what I'm thinking. "I need to return fire." The world we live in is constantly seeking to get us to emotionally escalate and engage in all kinds of conflict and unhealthy conversation. How does your faith work in those moments? So what we're really talking about as we jump into James 3, something called stewardship, about 25% of the teaching of the Lord Jesus was stewardship. And the big idea is this. God gives you money, what does He want you to do with it? God gives you time, what does He want you to do with it? God gives you resources and relationships, what does He want you to do with them? God gives you words, how are you supposed to invest them in good, not in evil? So I was thinking about it. How many words does the average person speak in a lifetime? And so I looked it up on the internet 'cause that's where all the truth is, and what I found was, this is probably wrong, but there was a guy in 1984 Gyles Brandreth he was working on a lexicon book and he was trying to figure out how many words the average person speaks or communicates verbally in a year. He came up with around roughly about a million words a year that the average person will speak, 860 million words in your lifetime. And so about a million words a year give or take. Now, this was in 1984. Now, I don't know if you know, since then we've created something called the internet and now we've got our cell phones, so it's call, text, email, conversations, calls, posts online, likes, tagging, comments, just the amount of communication has exploded. We're now communicating more words than ever in the history of the world. And I was thinking about it in my own life between sermons and daily devotions and books and study guides, I speak probably 4 million, 5 million, 6 million words a year. Add social media to that, I think I honestly communicate in one year what the average man communicates in a decade or what your dad communicated in his lifetime. That's what I do. And you think of all the words that we send out and how many of them really are coming from the heart of God and communicating the heart of God? And that's the big idea. And what really triggers us is when we get emotional and angry, or frustrated, or agitated, or tired, or upset, James told us earlier in James 1:19 and 20, "Know this my beloved brothers, "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, "slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce "the righteousness of God." He's gonna pick up that theme from chapter one, into

chapter three. When somebody is on your last nerve, when you're tired, when you're frustrated, when you're angry, when you're annoyed, when you're discouraged, when you're frustrated, when you're fearful, when you're anxious, the words you speak, do they bring forth life or death? Do they help or hurt the cause of God on the Earth? And so he's gonna jump right in. And the first thing he's gonna tell us is that your tongue wants to be your master. Now you need to master your tongue, but your tongue wants to master you. You're in quite a struggle with your tongue. James 3:1 and 2, "Not many of you should become teachers. "my brothers, for you know that we," he puts himself in that category, "who teach will be judged "with greater strictness. "For, we all stumble in many ways. "And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, "he's a perfect man, also able to bridle his whole body." So we can talk about teachers and judgment. And I'll just be honest with you right out of the beginning of the sermon, as we get into this sermon, you're probably gonna be convicted at some point. The Holy Spirit is gonna remind you of some things you've said that shouldn't have been said, and harm that shouldn't have come through the things that you've said. But let me start by saying, this is first and foremost a convicting text for me. When it says, "Hey, watch your mouth. "And if you're a teacher you're under double judgment." Huh, that's, that's very concerning for me. That is very concerning for me, that as a teacher you are judged more strictly because what you're teaching impacts more people, and the more people you impact, the more accountable to God you are. I take this as very, very serious. I started some years ago before I get up to preach, I'd spend time on my knees. I'd pray for you and I'd pray for our time together because, man, I wanna be under His authority if I'm going to exercise any authority. And this issue of being a teacher, I don't think I really understood this to the depth that I should have when I started. I got saved at 19, I started teaching my first Bible study within weeks. Within a month or two, I preached my first sermon. By 22, a pastor. By 25, I'm a senior pastor. And now that I get older, I look back and this verse every year has a little more weight for me. And it means a lot more to me. And it burdens me quite frankly, I think, in a healthy way, a lot more than it did when I was young. When he says that there's two kinds of teachers, there are those who were imperfect and know it, and own it, and work on it, and those who are imperfect and don't know it, or aren't working on it. What he doesn't say is that there's a perfect teacher. There isn't one. Well, there was one and we killed Him. The rest of us are imperfect teachers. So as you're looking for a teacher, maybe for your job, for ministry, for Bible, whatever the case may be, don't think, "Well, I need to find the perfect teacher." No, you need to find the teacher that knows that they're not perfect, and that they're following the one who is perfect, and they're making every effort to become like the one who is the perfect teacher. And what he's saying here is that ultimately, if you're going to teach, and let me just say this, we're all teachers. Okay, let me just ask you, what are some of the things that you guys do? We got nowhere to go, nothing to do. I obviously teach for a living, but what are the other ways that people in this very room right now are teachers? Parenting: how many of you have learned that parenting is teaching. That they're going to say what you say. I know this 'cause I was driving in a suburban some years ago with a cute daughter in the backseat and someone cut me off and I heard a very cute little voice with two pigtails say, "What an idiot." And I was like, "Oh, there's my disciple." Now what I couldn't do I couldn't look over at Grace, my wife, and be like, "Oh, train a child in the way they should go." That child was echoing dear old dad. And I realized I've verbal process people who drive, and I need to stop doing that. I also

have a horn ministry, and I needed to pray about that. Right. When you have a child, you suddenly realized that they're going to hear what you say, and eventually they're going to echo what you say, that you're teaching them whether you realize it or not. What are the other things that people in the room have as roles that you are a teacher?

- [Congregant] A trade.

- You've got a trade, you've got a job, maybe you own a company, maybe you're in management, maybe you're in leadership. You're training employees, you're doing onboarding, you're in HR. Some of you are teachers, literally in elementary or high school or college. Some of you are parents, you're literally homeschooling. Some of you are coaches for sports. Some of you are leaders in Church and ministry. It's amazing that we not only have teachers, but how many people look to us as a teacher. So for all of us, the question then is: how does this relate to judgment? 'Cause he's talking about teachers being judged more strictly, and there are three kinds of judgment; there is a judgment that comes from others, and if you're going to teach, you're going to have judgment from others. If you're gonna call the shots, you're gonna take the shots, that's the way that teaching and leadership works. And sometimes the criticism that comes from those that you're teaching, it is completely undeserved and they're just attacking you because they ideologically disagree with you. Sometimes what they're saying is partially true, but there's a lot of hurt or pain or misinformation or abuse of the facts that is involved. Sometimes what they're saying is just completely true. The key is to turn your critics into your coaches. Some of you are teachers, you are leaders and you get feedback and push back, and sometimes blow back. And when you do, I give you this principle from the life of Billy Graham. He's having a great day right now, Billy's hanging out with Jesus Billy's having a great day, but one of the greatest men in the history of our country is Billy Graham. And in a leadership book that was written regarding his life it said that he turned his critics into coaches, that he would teach and then people would criticize him. And rather than getting defensive and fighting with them, he would get humble and allow them to make him better. And so just have ears to hear, not everything that is said, but anything that is said that might help you be a better teacher. The second kind of judgment is not just from others, but it ultimately is from God. Now James is the little brother of Jesus, and I'm thinking here, he's probably got echoing in his ears the words of his big brother, Jesus Christ, who said Matthew 12:36 and 37, "I tell you on the day of judgment, "people will give account for every careless word "they speak for, by your words you will be justified, "and by your words you will be condemned." Now imagine that you stand before Jesus and He pulls up all your email, He's like, "Let's go through this." Then He pulls up your texts, "Let's go through this." Pulls up all your internet search history, "Let's go through this." All your social media comments and likes and reposts, "Let's go through this." And then He replays the conversations in your life. That's how many of you, that's quite terrifying. That is an incredibly concerning reality. And there's two kinds of judgment on that last day, for those who are not Christians, this will determine the degree of punishment that they experience or you experience in hell. Hell is a prison of perfect justice, where the punishment absolutely fits the crime. He's talking about, not just sin in general, but communication sins in particular. When the Bible here is speaking about the tongue and careless words, it's talking about all forms of communication.

For those who are Christian, that day of judgment will be a day of rewards. You are already judged at the cross of Jesus Christ if you are a Christian and you belong to Him, God judged you as a sinner at the cross, and He chose to forgive you through the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. But then on the last day God will judge you, and that is a judgment of rewards. That some of you have suffered very much and you'll be rewarded very much. Some of you have been rejected by a lot of people, and that will be overcome by complete, full acceptance from God. And that there are some people who, they're going to heaven, but they're not going to get the same degree of eternal rewards. So since people are judging us and God will judge us, the best way to live for the last day is for us to judge ourselves. You hear people say this all the time. "Well, only God can judge me." Actually, that's not true, you can also judge yourself. And it's really helpful to judge yourself before you stand before God for judgment. And to just evaluate your own life and ask, "Okay, what are the things that I am saying that are not helpful or not truthful?" "What are the words that I'm communicating that may be pulling hell up on the Earth instead of inviting heaven down to the Earth?" "What are the words that I'm speaking that are beating people down rather than building people up?" And to do a bit of an assessment and an analysis on our own communication and to judge ourselves. For some of you, I would just encourage you, scroll through your texts, check your emails, go through your social media and just ask, "Huh, is this what the Lord would have me to communicate?" Because the truth is we're all communicating something, and let's just be honest, this is a broken, flawed, horrible head-on collision world right now. When everyone is yelling at everyone, no one is ministering to anyone, and no one is listening to anyone, and the goal is to ultimately continually pursue progress. What he says is, "We all stumble in many ways, and none of us is perfect." And so what we're not demanding is that you be perfect, but what we're encouraging is that we would all pursue not perfection but progress until one day we enter into the eternal state, which is perfection. Now I'll tell you where I started. So I grew up and I got saved at the age of 19. And I think my job when I was 19, that I was working as my summer job in college when I got saved, I was a longshoreman in a union. Okay. So if you, now, let me say this, if you've never heard longshoreman talk, don't, okay, don't, you're not missing anything. The topics are not good and the words are colorful, okay. So I get saved and I am a longshoreman, and then almost immediately I'm teaching the Bible, and what I feel like is while I did not have a good bridle on my tongue, but I'm doing better than the longshoreman, so I felt like I was doing good. And that's not that good. That's like, "I'm the best drunk guy. That's still not that great, you know. So I'm the most self-controlled longshoreman. Well, congratulations, you know. So early on in ministry, as I'm teaching, I didn't have as good a bridle on my tongue as I should have, and I happened to start ministry around the time that the internet comes online and I'm a public figure, and there are things in my history that I've said that I regret, and I would hope to do better by God's grace. And I would just invite us all to sort of assess and look at our life and our communication and just ask, "Is this a ministry or am I just causing misery?" And it's true for all of us. So I'm just gonna say a few things about this battle that we all have with our tongue, but a couple of things I would just say, for those of you who are younger, I want you to be aware that you live in an incredibly unique period of human history, that the internet has changed everything. And what we're finding now is even emails or social media posts that were 15, 20 years ago, are now being brought up to crucify people and cancel them. And so just be

thinking that the world is turning against faith, family, and freedom. If you are younger, what you are posting or sending digitally, it can and will be used against you in the court of public opinion. And God may have you delete a company or a ministry or run for a political office, and heaven forbid you have been imperfect because they will find out exactly what you have said, and they will use it to damage you, so just be careful and cautious and aware. For those of you who are single you may think, "Well, I don't need to really get a handle on my mouth "and my communication, and my tone, and my language, and my speech, because it's just me, I'm not married and I don't have kids. What I would say is, the earlier you start to have self-control the better off you will be. The longer you wait, the worse that it gets. Furthermore, if you want to attract someone, you should conduct yourself in such a way that the kind of person you would want would want to be with someone like you.

- [Congregant] Amen.

- Amen. Okay. So there's a dad, his praying for his daughter, okay. How many of you are, you're young married, or one day you will be young married, you set patterns and precedents very early on in your marriage. And culture is what you teach and tolerate, that's true in business, ministry and home. And you may say, "Well, the Bible says to love one another "and build one another up, and not to be bitter "and to not be angry." But if you tolerate that in your home, you're setting a culture that contradicts the culture that God would intend for you. And so early on in marriage, how you resolve conflict, what you do with your emotions and whether or not you use good or bad nicknames, 'cause the truth is we have nicknames for two kinds of people: the people we love and the people we hate, and sometimes for our spouse, we've got one of each. Oh, you guys laugh, so you know what I'm talking about? A lot of wives are like. A lot of husbands are like . Husband's already making eye contact right now. So I know you're all the guilty ones. Come to "Real Men" on Wednesday night, we'll straighten you out. All right, so now when you have children or you have grandchildren, this becomes even more important because they frame reality and their own identity based upon your communication. And some of you grew up in homes where literally the parents and, or the grandparents, they were cursing you. We tend to think of cursing is just using bad words, and it can be, but sometimes a curse is a powerful generational binding. We'll look at our kids and sometimes say the most horrible things because we're echoing the things that our parents falsely prophesied over us. Some of you were told horrible things growing up, "You're an idiot." "You're a failure." "You're a disappointment." "You blew it again." "You can't be trusted." "You don't grow up." "You don't listen." "There's no hope for you." "There's no future for you." "I'm not even sure why we had you." What that is is that is cursing, that is cursing your legacy, that's cursing your family. We're supposed to put blessing over them. "I love you. "I forgive you. "I have hope for you. "There's grace for you. "God has a destiny for you." Instead we curse. And sometimes what we do is in the moment of emotion or an angst or anger, he says, we all stumble in many ways, and we don't bridle our tongue. What happens is, sometimes in those moments, we're echoing what our parents said, not what our Father says. Like, "Why do I say the same things that my parents said? "I hated what they said, but I find myself repeating it." It's because you're living under and extending the curse that was put over you. And so, instead it's saying, "What does the Father

say?" So now He's going to talk about the tongue. So this is gonna get real personal, he's gonna use some very strong evocative images, trying to emotionally awaken a sense of urgency because we can hear this and say, "Well, that is important," but for us it needs to be urgent. And so the first thing he's gonna say is, "Your tongue wants to run wild." James 3:3. "If we put bits in the mouth of horses so that they obey us, "we guide their whole bodies as well.' So I'm gonna use the language of rodeo. So I'll tell you my first, I've been to two rodeos, so we do a horse story. I grew up in the city I don't have a lot of horse stories, but I have been to two rodeos, the first was in Prescott, up in the mountains, it's a beautiful place, pray for them 'cause they don't know how to read, it's spelled P-R-E-S-C-O-T-T. They pronounce it, P-R-E-S-K-I-T-T. So their world. So I love it up there, but I was up in Preskitt, and they have what they call the world's oldest rodeo. And so somebody wanted to go they're like, "Do you want to go?" "Yeah." I was like, "Actually, this is my first rodeo." So I went to my first rodeo I think Prescott, Arizona, and it was amazing because they have these huge, powerful beasts that they've absolutely train to obey, to ride around barrels, to stop on a dime, it was incredible. I've got a German Shepherd, I can't get to do anything. The only thing my Shepherd will do is shed, that's all I can get it to do. So my whole house looks like I run a dog spa, there's just fur for everywhere, and I can't get the dog to do anything. Literally this morning I wanted the dog to, I was like, "Get up," and he just looked at me like, "Nah." I was like, "Hey, Genesis says I have dominion." "Oh, I didn't read that." I mean, there's just no obedience from my dog. And so I'm watching these horses and I'm thinking, "That's incredible how disciplined and controlled they are." But you know what makes it all possible? A little tiny bit in the mouth. And now all of a sudden the rider has authority and dominion to control this massively strong and capable beast, and the analogy is of our tongue. You're needing to bridle your own tongue and you're needing to stay in the saddle of your own emotions. Second rodeo I went to was in Missouri. And so if you're seeing a rural theme with rodeos, you're paying attention. So I was in Missouri at a men's event, spoke in this big stadium, brought my sons with me a couple of years ago, and for a break at night they brought in the Professional Bull Riders Association. They literally put in a rodeo in a men's conference at a stadium and they brought in wild horses and bulls. I was like, "This is incredible." They're like, "Do you wanna go down near the bulls? I was like, "I do." So we went down and I'm up on the fence and the animals they're just caged in before they're released, okay. For those of you that are rodeo folk, what do they call where they hold the animal before they let it out?

- [Congregation] The shoot.

- The shoot. So we just found all our guests from Preskitt. So what happens is they let the animal out and these are not trained animals, these are wild animals. It's a completely different ride. I mean, it looks like this. So this is exactly what it looks like. This is what it looks like, okay. And here's James's big idea, right, that horse is your mouth and that's you, okay . Now how many of you that makes perfect sense? And if some of you are like, "I don't know what it means, "and it doesn't make any sense." Ask your spouse. They'll clarify that this is in fact an accurate picture. And the moral of the story is, this is what it's like to try and tame your tongue every single day, true or false?

- [Congregation] True.

- Okay. So let me give you a couple of tips. Just some practical thoughts on how to tame your tongue 'cause it wants to run wild. Number one: set and keep boundaries. There are certain people you just can't have a healthy conversation with them or you to set the boundaries for the conversation. "Hey, I love you, "I don't wanna talk about that anymore. "You're bitter, you need to go repent of your bitterness "and work it out with God and go talk to them." "That's gossip, look, that's their personal business, "you shouldn't be sharing it with me. "Hey, you just always wanna argue and fight "and I don't wanna do that. "We disagree, can we just agree to disagree?" There are certain people that you need to set boundaries with and say, "You need to abide by these boundaries "because I can't have healthy communication with you. "And if you can't abide by those boundaries, "I can't have any communication with you "because you're just running wild, "and I don't wanna run with you." In addition, just a couple of practical thoughts. You need to learn to ignore anonymous in a digital age. How many of you are online, and somebody just triggers you. So you've got a comment or you've got to get involved, but here's the big idea, most of the profiles online, or many of them, they're not real people, they're just fake. So why get emotionally sucked in? Like, who cares if Chubby Bunny 666 doesn't like you, it's probably not their birth name. I don't think of their Chubby first name, Bunny middle name, 666 last name, It's probably not a real person. It's probably just somebody home in their pajamas with nothing to do and, you know, fifth of vodka, so just, you know, you have your day, they have their day. How many of you have gotten sucked in to arguments online with people you'll never gonna meet that actually aren't even real people? Just ignore anonymous unless it's a human being that you know, don't get involved or engaged. Number three: sometimes it's just good to unfollow. Like, "You know what, "that news source just triggers me, "I get all worked up and then I get emotionally responsive, "and that's what I'm talking about all day, or, "Those people on social media" or "Those trends," or whatever it may be. "I just need to, I just need to unplug my soul." Because here's what happens when you turn your phone on, you plug your soul in. The question is, is that where you want it plugged in all day? If it's going to emotionally upset you, and instigate you, and agitate you and then cause you to talk about it all day or respond to it online, maybe it's better just to walk away. And some things are good to unfollow, unfriend and ignore. And sometimes you just need to take a tech sabb, sometimes you don't even know how much you are over-communicating or unhealthy communicating till you just stop and take a break. So there was a season in my life, I took 18 months off of social media. People could say whatever they want about me, I didn't even read it or respond. Every once in a while somebody would come up, they'd be like, "Did you hear what so-and-so said?" "Nope. And I don't care. "Cause I'm holding Grace's hand "and we're going for a walk today "and that's what I'm doing. "Rather than arguing with them "I'm going to enjoy time with her. "I'm gonna go sit and ask the kids how they're doing? "I'll go spend some time in prayer." I took a break and then once I re-entered, I realized how much time, and energy, and emotion it took. This is why Grace doesn't do social media. I can't get my wife to do social media. She's like, "Nah, I don't need that." I'm trying to get Bible teaching out, so I use it. But if I wasn't a Bible teacher, I don't think I'd be on social media. If I wasn't trying to get a message out, I don't think I would wade into that septic tank and go for a swim. And so it's just really sometimes just taking a break. And

this may mean, "Hey, at five o'clock "I shut my phone off. "I only check my calls, texts and emails "at certain points in times through the day. "On my Sabbath day, I actually take it. "When I go on vacation, "I just take a break or maybe I just exit for a while." And here's a very important thing to know. If you get sucked into certain communications where you lose the bridle on your tongue and you get bucked off the horse of your emotions, sometimes what you just need to do is just walk away and not have the conversation. In Genesis 3, Satan shows up Adam and Eve had a conversation and it's literally been brutality for human history ever since. You know what Adam and Eve should've done when the serpent showed up, said, "Hey, I'm gonna talk to you guys." You know what they should have done? "Hey, no, we're going on date night "at Applebee's, we're getting the Oreo shake, we're busy." You know, that's just, they should have just walked away. There are certain people like, "Why do you got to have the conversation? "Why do you need to have the argument? "Why do you need to get sucked in and triggered? "I love you, we're out." There's this constant battle between us and our tongue. He's gonna use some other evocative images to awaken sense of urgency within us. He says, "Your tongue wants to sink you." James 3:4, look at the shifts, okay. So if you're in Arizona, Google ships, you can't look at the ships, but you can find one. "They are so large and driven by strong winds," he's talking about sailboats primarily in that day, "they're guided by a very small rudder, "wherever the will of the pilot directs." Again, these images are denoting, powerful possibility for good or evil that is directed by something small, like a bit in the mouth of a horse or a rudder on the back of a ship, okay. So again, a horse, tremendous power has to be directed. A ship, tremendous power has to be directed. In both occasions if it's not directed people get hurt and die. Painful things happen. All of the energy is used for devastation and not for good. And so think about it. How big is a ship and how small, how small is a rudder? But what happens if you lose the rudder? I'll share a picture with you. I want this to evoke a sense of urgency in you. So this is the Bismarck. This was a ship constructed by the Nazis in 1940, it was the largest, strongest battleship built in the history of the world. Most of the ships had 8 to 11 inch rounds, this shot 15 inch rounds. It was considered an unsinkable ship and they were anticipating that this would allow them to decimate all other military fleets at sea. I'll tell you the story of the Bismarck. It was commissioned in 1940, it was 825 feet long, the largest battleship in the world, eight guns, shells 15 inches across as well as some five dozen other armaments. The Bismarck on-board targeting computer was so precise that it blew away the HMS Hood, which had been the pride of the Royal Navy with a single shot. Think about that. The Royal Navy comes out and says, "Okay, we're gonna fight the Bismarck for the first time." One shot sank the best ship in the Royal Navy. This is like, you show up for a fight and it's like a old shootout in a Western town. Like they pull a gun and you pull a Nerf gun then it's a bad day. All of a sudden with the Bismarck, every other gun is a Nerf gun. It is incapable of being defeated, at least that's what they thought. It goes on to say, "As grand as the Bismarck was, "it had one small but fatal weakness, "a vulnerable rudder was located right beneath "its thermal exhaust port. "In the darkness of night on May 24th, 1941, "the Royal Navy attacked the ship with little success. "The original shots literally just bounced off the ship "until one torpedo hit it's rudder. "The boat was severely disabled, "attacked fiercely, and defeated." That ship came down because one torpedo found the rudder. It rendered it literally dead in the water and it took a lot of shelling, but eventually they sank it. There was a slogan that came out during World War II and it was

available on posters from a distillery, you've probably heard this phrase, "Loose lips, sink ships." And the point was we're at war, and if you know what is going on in the field of combat and battle, don't talk about it because the enemy could find that out and that could put at risk our soldiers and troops. It's still true "Loose lips, sink ships." That's what James is saying. Now some of you, you've built an incredible life, you've built a business. Don't sink your ship. You've built a marriage, don't sink your ship. You built your family, don't sink your ship. You've build your ministry, don't sink your ship. And the thing that can sink your ship, even if it seems indestructible, is just some loose lips, Just some loose lips. Anger, bitterness, all of a sudden you've sent a torpedo into your own ship. The third analogy he's gonna use is wildfire. This is, again, evocative image. Your tongue wants to unleash hell. James 3:5 and 6. "So also the tongue is a small member, "yet it boasts of great things." This was 2000 years ago, it's a very old book. Not sure it's relevant anymore. Do people still brag? Is that a thing?

- [Congregant] Oh, yeah.

- Oh, okay. Good, good. Okay, good. Thanks for confirming. "How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!" You ever been in a wildfire? It moves so fast. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. "The tongue is set among our members, "staining the whole body, setting on fire "the entire course of life, "and the tongue is set on fire," by what?

- [Congregant] Hell.

- Hell? Let me show you what this looks like. How many of you are from California? They sheepishly raised their hand or just like half, like, I don't know. Welcome. We love you. We're glad to have you. You're the wise one, you got out. Okay. This was in California. This was the Dixie Fire this year. How many of you remember seeing that on the news? This is what a wildfire looks like. Now, let me tell you a little bit about the Dixie Fire. 1300 structures were destroyed. They spent \$540 billion fighting this fire. It burdened nearly a million acres, larger than New York City, Chicago, Dallas, and L.A. combined. Question: how did it start? Answer: nobody's exactly sure. There's a couple of different guesstimates. Here's the big idea. It just takes, it just takes one small spark and next thing you know, a million acres are gone. And sometimes the question is, "Well, let's figure out "what started it so we can prevent it." The answer is: we don't even know what started it. It was so small that nobody saw it and it moved so fast that we didn't know where it started from. This is exactly what is happening in our world. Every day, people get up, turn on their phone and we figure out what, who or what is on fire today. Every day is just rage, and anger, and fear, and emotional triggering, and responding, and yelling and blaming, and then we wake up the next day and we do it again. Here's some of the ways that this manifests itself; gossiping, telling news that is not ours to tell. And as I always say, as Christians, these are prayer requests. "I'll pray for them." They'll pray for you, you gossip. Sometimes it's just flat out lying, things that just aren't true. There was a poll that was done, said that a fake news travels six times faster than real news. We get all emotional and respond, and then we realize, "Oh, that wasn't true. "I just wasted all that time and energy." False witness: "Did you hear what they said?" That's not exactly what they said. Or, "You know why they said or did that?" Now we're

questioning the motive of the heart. God knows the heart. Most of us don't. Libel, slander, defamation. Those things do not equally apply to private citizens as they do public figures. As a result of things you can say about public figures is horrifying. So a lot of our time unleashing hell on the Earth is about those who are in positions of leadership or authority. The Bible says we should be praying for politicians and those in authority, instead we're setting them on fire. Flirting: you're not married to them, why are you flirting with them? "Well, it's harmless." No, it's not, it's hellish. Threatening, intimidating, demanding, yelling, this can just be a parent raising their voice to overwhelm and intimidate a child. And this can be a husband raising his voice to overwhelm and intimidate a spouse. There's nothing wrong with passion, but when anger and hell are involved, it's a win-lose game. That's gonna include false teaching, saying something that's not in the Bible. This is really popular, by the way, right now, I think we're in the midst of a generational apostasy.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- It's just, it's terrifying and horrifying that people get up and they're like, "I'm a pastor." You're like, "Um, nope, nope, no, no you're kindling." Like "You're gonna be on fire in the end. "You shouldn't be pretending "to speak for the King right now." There's a lot of mockery. Bible doesn't have anything good to say about the mocker. Just trashing people. There's flattery, this is trying to get someone to trust you so that you can manipulate or benefit from them. Just cursing, unholy oaths, "I'll never forgive you. "We're never gonna get through this. "I'm done with you. "There's no hope for you." It's just a graceless sense of the future. You know, there's something called persona non grata, that's a person without grace. I'll tell you what, until we stand before Jesus, we just need to keep putting grace on people and then He can figure it out in the end. Name-calling, excuse making, and as soon as we unleash hell and people pointed out, "You shouldn't have said that. "Look at all the devastation it's caused," you make excuses. "I was emotional. "I was tired. "I was hungry. "It's my personality," you know. Or "This is my ethnicity. "We're Irish. "We're Italian. We're Spanish. "We're human." In addition, the way these fires get unleashed, fake news, PR spin and how many kids are going to school and they call it education, but it's really indoctrination.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- It's just, "Hey kid, we're gonna set you on fire. "We're gonna set you on fire. "And if you try to put out the word of God, "then there's throttling." Paul called this the suppression of the truth. So even if you're trying to get a positive message out, it's not going to get the same support as a negative message. And what happens in the world we live in, every day is hell day. How many of you feel this? Just the amount of negative news and anger and unholy, unhelpful communication is just reached the point of intolerable. What happens then is because of technology, a fire can get started anywhere and everyone can throw their log on it. Now we can throw our own fuel on the fire. So what you end up with is what I call unholy alliances in a negative narrative. Unholy alliance is, "I wanna set that person or organization "or thing on fire." And then the other, the other arsonists gather around, they're like, "That sounds like a great

idea, "let's set them or it on fire." That's an unholy alliance, and then a negative narrative is set. And what's the negative narrative's set all information gets interpreted through the negative narrative and thrown on the pile as fuel for the fire. I'll give you an example. So I believe one of the reasons that James is articulating this, is that his brother was Jesus. Now his brother is God, Lord, Savior, King, Christ. But there was a negative narrative set, not only against his brother, but his family by an unholy alliance. So it was said of Jesus that he was a drunkard and a glutton. "You know why Jesus makes big claims? "He's an alcoholic." And then Jesus heals a guy. And I don't know how you could be anti healing. I mean, that's quite a thing. They show up and they say, "He healed them, we can't deny that." So the unholy alliance decides, "How do we set a negative narrative?" by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he heals. Like, so Jesus now is demon possessed and an alcoholic. Jesus! Now James heard this about his big brother. Now to continue the fight they went after John the Baptizer, who was a cousin to Jesus and James. And he was a preacher and a prophet, and his first converts and followers, they were the basis of Jesus' original ministry. So John baptizes Jesus, and then he sort of steps back, Jesus takes over, and the followers of John the Baptizer become the followers of Jesus Christ. So to damage or to harm Jesus' ministry, they also extend the fight to John. Jesus said that John is the greatest man who's ever walked on the Earth. They said that He was demon possessed. And they took the fight to Jesus' own mother, James' own mother, Mary. Do you remember the negative narrative set by the unholy alliance? "At least we know who our father is. "Your crazy loon of a mom was reading Isaiah "about a virgin giving birth to the Messiah says, it's her. "Here's the truth, Your mom is a horrible woman. "She slept with so many men that your paternity "is a mystery, You don't even know who your real dad is, "but Your adoptive dad is such an idiot that he thinks "that Your crazy, you know, immoral mother "is the mother of God." They trashed His mom. James heard this about his mother, James heard this about his cousin. James heard this about his brother. And you know what it was, it was all hell. And every day, the words that we speak, they either pull hell up or they invite heaven down. It's either fire or water. It's either igniting or it is suppressing. And James has lived through this, and he's living through it. Now they're trashing him. And the unholy alliance has come after him in the negative narrative. And he uses the language here, he says that that kind of communication, it comes from hell. The word He uses in the original text, not to get super nerdy on you is Gehenna. Jesus uses the word Gehenna about 11 times, and it's this evocative picture. So Jerusalem, went there some years ago with the kids, it's an old fortified city, surrounded by walls. Outside of the city, there was a place called Gehenna. Gehenna was a place where pagan people to demonic gods would sacrifice children. Now were horrified by that, today we call it the clinic. So that's where they would sacrifice children, and as a result, God's people considered that a place that was absolutely cursed. It was just demonic, and dark, and defiled, and disgusting, and as a result, they wouldn't have anything to do with it or go near it. So eventually it became the town dump. So all the garbage and the refuse and everything that is broken and everything that is decaying would go there. And if you died they would give you a burial unless you were an outcast or a criminal, and then they would just throw your body there and not even give you a proper burial. And the language at the end of Isaiah is something that Jesus picks up on, that then James continues. And that is that during the day, you would just see the smoke rising as it's burning, and then night you would see the flames rising because Gehenna was this

perpetual burning dump of death, and decay, and demonic, and destruction. And what he says is, that our tongue can just unleash Gehenna, and we could just set people on fire, we could set things on fire. We could just bring death, and destruction, and decay and the demonic. And I love you, and I know this is a convicting word, but I pray it would be a healing word. How many of you, it was your parents that just set your family on fire? How many of you, it was your grandparents that set your family on fire? For some of you, the fire is just now raging, it's getting other people involved. Now it's going online, now, relatives are involved, now family and friends are involved. How many of you, you're the arsonist? Sometimes we're the victim, sometimes we're the arsonist. Sometimes we know in our heart, "I started it. "And if I didn't start it, I showed up "and I threw my logs on the fire, "and I blew on it, and I helped the wildfire spread." Just what comes to mind is this, I've said this before. You know something is of the Lord when it's a win-win 'cause the Lord loves all of his children. You know something is of the flesh when it's a win-lose, I win, you lose. You know, something is of the devil, when it's a lose-lose. Who wins in a wildfire? Like a literal wildfire comes to a town, who wins?

- [Congregant] Nobody.

- Nobody, everybody loses. And what he's saying is every day, the words that we speak are either inviting heaven down, or they're pulling hell up. We're either the arsonist or the firefighter. We're either starting it, or we are pouring water on it. Now let me say this. The world we live in, it's getting worse. True? It's worse.

- Yep.

- Try to be the adult in the conversation. Try to be the one who brings the fruit of the spirit, you will get set on fire,

- For sure.

- Okay. Now what He's not trying to do is discourage us, but to prepare us to live in the reality of this world, but he also has the example of his brother Jesus. So let me bring you to James' brother Jesus. So Jesus is hanging on the cross to die for our sins as our Lord and Savior. And what people are doing, they are literally just giving Him hell. It's literally just the tongue unleashing hell, cursing Him, yelling at Him, name calling Him, destroying His reputation, mocking His family, they're literally giving them Him hell. What does Jesus give them? Heaven, He puts grace on them. "Father, forgive them." Forgive them, and then He dies to answer His own prayer so that we could be forgiven. The point is this, when they give you hell, you've got to give them heaven. When they set it on fire, you need to find a bucket of water. And this is the most difficult, when you're the most emotional, true or false?

- [Congregant] True.

- When you're emotional, you're like, "Oh!" Hey, then maybe you need to talk to Him before you

talk to them. Maybe you need to say nothing, because if you say anything, eventually you'll say the wrong thing. And then he closes with this. "The Holy Spirit can transform your tongue." Here's the hope. Here's the hope. Now there's only hope if you are Christian and have the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, there's no hope, but here's what he says. James 3:7 through 12. "For every kind of beast and bird, "of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed "and has been tamed by mankind." It's really weird what people will pick as pets. I did, be serious, real quick, I looked online. I found somebody that has a pet moose. Somebody else had pet wolves, pet bear, and this year a guy with a mullet on Netflix had pet tigers. I didn't watch the show 'cause as soon as I see a mullet it kind of triggers me with my family heritage. And I know if there's a mullet it doesn't end well, you put a mullet and a tiger I could just tell you it's not gonna end well. But it's weird that certain people contain certain animals. But what he says is, "The tongue can never be tamed." "But no human being can tame the tongue." How many of you have just tried? Right "It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." It just stings people, and it poisons people, and it kills relationships. "With it we bless our Lord and Father," we sing the songs, we pray the prayers, hallelujah, "and with it we curse people "who are made in the likeness of God." We trash their reputation, we gossip, we slander. "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. "My brothers, these things ought not to be so." And then he gives us a series of analogies. Again, evocative imagery. "Does a spring pour forth from the same opening "both fresh and salt water? "Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, "or a grapevine produce figs? "Neither can a salt pond produce fresh water." Now all of these are communicating the same thing. And that is that what happens out there is just exposing what's in here. So he gives the analogy first and foremost of let's say a spring, I've used this analogy before. So there's there's water in here, so when I bumped it, what comes out?

- [Congregation] Water.

- Water. If anger comes out of you, what's in you?

- [Congregation] Anger.

- Anger. If bitterness comes out of you, what's in you?

- Bitterness.

- Bitterness. If defensiveness comes out of you, what's in you? Defensiveness. And oftentimes like, "I need to defend myself. "I need to defend my reputation." Why? I struggled with anxiety about that for many years, and then a few years ago I was praying, I was like, "God, this is what they're saying about me." And God's like, "Did you get," this is literally the conversation, how the Father said, "Son, did you give Me your sin?" I said, "Yes, Father." He said, "Then why won't you give Me your reputation?" I was like, "Oh, yeah! "If I give you what I hate, "why wouldn't I give you what I love? "I mean, why wouldn't I give you everything?" If defensiveness comes out of you, if bitterness comes out of you, if anger comes out of you, if anxiety comes out of you, if fear comes out of you, if control comes out of you, if death comes out of you, what's in you?

Whatever comes out. Pressure, hardship, emotion don't change us, they expose and reveal us. And what He says is that we need to be consistent with what comes out of us. What He says is different trees produce different kinds of fruits. So let's say you leave here and you decide, "I like pears and apples and cherries. "I'm gonna go get myself a pear, cherry, apple tree," and go to the nursery. They're like, "What kind of tree do you want?" I wanna treat that makes pear and apples and cherries." They're gonna say, "You're nuts." Each tree bears one kind of fruit. That you and I are like trees, and a good tree bears good fruit to quote James' big brother, Jesus. And what He's saying is, if the fruit that's coming out of you is not the fruit of the Holy Spirit then there's something wrong in you that can only be changed and fixed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But He doesn't say is this, "Tame your tongue," 'cause it's impossible. What he says is, "You can't tame your tongue, but God can." So the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. That's the fruit that comes out of the person that is filled with the Holy Spirit. A good tree bears good fruit. And so what he's saying is, you may sing songs and you may pray prayers and may quote verses, but if what's coming out of you is not what comes from Him then you need to be honest about what is in you, and you need to invite the Holy Spirit to change who you are, and that will change what you say. Now, let me say this. This is not to condemn you, but just to cause you to be aware. So what oftentimes happens is, the person says or does something, and then we say something that is ungodly or unholy or unhelpful, and then we blame the circumstances of the person for what came out of us. Here's what Jesus says, "Out of the abundance of the heart "the mouth speaks. "The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good: "and the evil person out of the evil treasure of his heart "brings forth evil." The words we speak are an invitation by God, to be honest about the heart that we have. And sometimes when it comes out, here's what you don't need to do: double down. Here's what you don't need to do: pretend you didn't say it. Here's what you don't need to do: minimize it. Here's what you don't need to do; blame shift and talk about them. Here's what you don't need to do: deny it. "I didn't say that. "That's not what I meant." Here's what you need to do: stop talking to them and go talk to Him. "Father, I'm apparently very angry, "there's something not good in here, Dad." "Father, I'm really fearful and anxious, "and, man, I'm not doing so well." "Father, I am so worried about what everyone thinks and says "about me, I'm not even really concerned about "what you're saying, "my ears are closed to you and they're too open to them. "Father, why am I a people pleaser?" "Why do I have fear of man?" "Why do I let people's opinions of me dictate "how I see myself "instead of how you see me?" "Father, I'm just, I'm a control freak. "I just don't truly trust that you are in authority "and so I feel like I need to be." What happens is, in those moments where we see who we are, you have two options; accepted it or accept it and then invite the Holy Spirit to change it. Because a lot of times people are like, "This is who I am. "This is how I am. "This is me." No, no, that's you before the Holy Spirit fixes you. And in those moments it is literally stopping, and it is inviting the Holy Spirit and saying, "Okay, what's coming out is not the fruit of the Spirit, "so I need to stop speaking, start listening. "Be slow to speak, quick to listen, slow to anger. "I need to do the James 1:19 and 20." And this is what it sounds like. A tame tongue says things like, please, thank you, no sense of entitlement. "Thank you, I appreciate that. "It's my fault. "It's not your fault, it's my fault. "It's my fault." "I'm sorry. "I'm sorry, please forgive me. "This needs to change. "This should have never been said "and it should never be said again." "I love

you. "I appreciate you. "I enjoy you. "How I feel is different than what I said. "What I said was not how I feel, "and I'm sorry for what I said "and the damage that I've done." "I forgive you. "I'm not gonna bring it up. "I'm not gonna rub your nose in it. "Not gonna make this a recurring conversation. "I forgive you. "I've let it go." "I'm praying for you. "I'm praying for you. "How can I help you?" That's what the tamed tongue sounds like. Now, here's what's going to happen. Out there, the wildfire is just going to burn until every inch of the Earth has been burned to the ground, but in here you can be a good tree that bears good fruit because you are the children of God. If you are a Christian and you have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit can change you from the inside out, and what the redeemed tongue does is incredible. I'm gonna close with two sort of word pictures as I was praying for you; one from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament. There's a guy in the old Testament named Isaiah, he's a prophet and a man of God, and then Jesus shows up and he gets an invitation into the presence of God and the unseen realm. He sees Jesus high and exalted seated on a throne 700-ish years before He even stepped on the Earth, He's in heaven ruling and reigning, surrounded by angels, crying out, "Holy holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" Isaiah felt like he was a pretty good guy until he got before Jesus. And sometimes you don't know how unholy you are until you're in the presence of the Holy One. And his first response, I don't know if you know the story of Isaiah, what he says is, "Woe is me! I'm cursed, "I'm doomed, I'm a dead man. "I'm a man of unclean lips, "and I come from a people of unclean lips." And then an angel takes a hot coal, brings it to him, presses it on his lips, says, "Your sin as atoned for, you are forgiven," purifies his mouth. And then he goes on to preach and give us the entire Book of Isaiah. The point is, we all are people of unclean lips and we come from a people of unclean lips. And the Holy Spirit right now, says, "I wanna purify that, "I wanna forgive that. "I wanna cleanse that. "But I want those lips to be anointed "and appointed for things like prayer, and worship, "and encouragement and blessing." When the gathering of the first believers happened in the Book of Acts, chapter two, like you all are gathered, the Holy Spirit came down. So again, we either pull hell up or we invite heaven down. The Holy Spirit comes down, He rests above each of the people, if you know the story, like what? Tongues of fire. What fire does is it purifies in that sense. And then what God is doing is He is literally taking His tongue and using it to transform their tongue so that they would go out and sing the praises of Jesus and that they would pray and evangelize and share scripture and bring truth to a world filled with lies and bring life to a world filled with death, and bring hope to a world filled with fear and anxiety, and bring reconciliation to a world filled with devastation. And here we are 2000 years later and the good news just keeps going forth. So here's what we're going to do. We're gonna ask ourselves, so I'm asking you, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you today? Before you speak to Him, you need to listen to Him. What is He saying to you? What do you need to apologize to God? Is there someone here you need to just literally tell them, "I'm sorry. "I heard this sermon, I didn't ignore it. "We'll talk on the way home. "Please forgive me." Is there something specific that you have said that you need to own so that they can be healed and your relationship can be restored? We're gonna spend our time with our tongues, doing something in here that they're not doing out there, and that is worshiping. It is using the tongue that God has given us, and the way that we start to bridle our tongue is by singing and praising and praying together in worship to the Lord. Father God, thank you for the opportunity you've given me to teach your word. Father, I come under the authority of your word,

I accept that it says that teachers will be judged ore strictly. Holy Spirit please help me to bridle my tongue and to love and serve these dear people well. God, thank you that they're willing to sit and to listen to your word. And I pray, God, that as James said, we would not merely listen to the word and deceive ourselves that we would do what it says. And so God, we come now to pray, we come now to worship, we come now to sing, and we invite the Holy Spirit to come upon us like a tongue of fire to control our tongue and set it aflame for the passion of Jesus so that we could sing His praises and leave here to share our good news in a world that's filled with bad news, and to bring hope in a world that completely lacks it, and to bring life to people who are just being devastated and destroyed every day. So God, we thank you for this little break from Gehenna as we spend time in Your presence in Jesus' good name. Amen.