

Taming the Tongue

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[0 : 00] How about that? Occasionally I get to my truck in the morning and I come back in and I tell them they change things overnight. I need a key. Thank you for lunch.

Thank you for the great fellowship. I love this church and I love the people of this church. And it's no matter where we go, the people of God are the people of God. And it's good to be together, isn't it? Yeah, if you want, turn in your Bible to James chapter 3. And what I'm going to do in this session is, as Chris said, talk about taming the tongue. And the tongue is amoral, by the way, just like the money in your pocket is amoral.

It has no moral quality to it. It's what you do with it. And that's what we're going to talk about. And you might wonder, how does this fit into a family conference?

And I think this is a significant issue, particularly for young people in an era. And I know I sound old when I say this, but I am. But in this particular era, there is an opportunity for people to use their voice in a way that was unheard of in prior generations.

[1 : 14] And not only to use their voice, but to be exposed to other people's voice. And so, as with everything else, mom and dad, we've got to learn first so that we can turn and teach our children.

So the tongue sits in our mouth. It's guarded and protected by 32 of the hardest substances in the human body, called teeth.

One of the first skills an infant learns is the formation and enunciation of words, using that tongue. And this learning process is driven by an enormous force within an infant and every human being, and that is to be heard, to be understood.

The first words of an infant usually is some form of mommy or daddy. Of course, these days, I'm listening for papa. That's easier to say than mommy and daddy sometimes.

From then on, the power of words in the mouth of an infant only increases. And by the time a child reaches the age of eight, they know 10,000 words.

[2 : 21] Studies have shown that most adults know somewhere between 20,000 and 35,000 words. So their accumulation of vocabulary is very, very quick.

Because the average four-year-old already knows 5,000 words. And some of you have heard every single one of those, if you have a four-year-old. So the title today is Taming the Tongue, and this is a biblical term.

In James 3, verse 8, it says, No one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. And of course, the title of our session seems to contradict that.

If no one can tame it, how in the world can we talk about taming it? Well, later on in James 3, in verse 10, it says, My brethren, these things ought not be this way.

So one of my goals today is to reconcile the need to tame the tongue with the statement that no one can. Tame the tongue. And first, I want to expand the nomenclature that we're using.

[3 : 23] In the Bible, and we're going to cover a lot of Bible today, you're probably used to that, the word tongue is a literary term that refers to words. When you see tongue in the Bible, if you replace that word with words, it hasn't changed the meaning at all.

And maybe has clarified it a little bit. But it is a picture. When the Bible talks about a tongue, it is referring to a phenomenon that James 3 points out that we'll look at here in a minute, of how small the tongue is and what a big problem the tongue can cause and what good the tongue can do. So the tongue is moral or immoral now, if you understand it to be words, because words are a reflection of hearts.

It wasn't long ago that unless you were very famous, or infamous actually, it was very likely that none of your opinions or thoughts would ever be broadcast or published to an audience beyond who's immediately in front of you.

That was largely true early in my lifetime. To have an audience of more than 50 people was unheard of. It would be extraordinary. The power of public opinion was in the hands of very few people.

[4 : 45] And what's happened now, and I'm sure you've noticed, the democratization and decentralization of information. I was reading a paper this morning on what they're calling the fifth turning, and it was detailing the explosion of information starting in the year 2000, going to 2001, and then everything that had been discovered in the year 2001 dwarfed all of known history, and then 2002 actually doubled 2001.

That is the progress of the dissemination of information. And the effects of this trend are that you can send a, I think they still call them tweets, or a Facebook post, or a TikTok, or a comment on an article online on the internet, and literally millions of people who you will never meet or even know of have read it.

And that's heady stuff for a proud populace. More incredible, your thoughts could be the impetus for an enormous response online.

That's what's called going viral. And that is the goal of most people, especially young people, online. And social media software is designed to feed off your innate desire to be heard.

It feeds the boastful pride of life, your sense of importance and influence. And for some reason, vast numbers of our population believe that the rest of the world really cares what they think.

[6 : 18] And many devoted participants in social media have outside perspectives on how big a ripple their words might make. And sometimes they're right.

So one would think that that kind of access to a vast audience, and a permanent public record, by the way, of what you say would cause people to be careful.

In fact, it's caused exactly the opposite. Communication has become more bold, more crass, heated, unimpeded by things like facts, or common sense, much less common decency.

In short, the ability or inability to control words is on full public display by people who seem to be largely unaware or unconcerned about any of that.

If you want to understand the uninhibited and transparent depravity of man, look on social media. Or maybe you shouldn't. If you've ever been involved in situations where you actually have the actual information that everybody on social media is going viral commenting on, it's an awesome feeling to understand that most of what is being said out there isn't even based in truth.

[7 : 41] It's the nature of public discourse. So let's look at James 3 to start. And I'll read through the first 12 verses. I don't think there's a more condensed or profound treatment of how we are to use words than in this passage, anywhere in the Bible.

And much of the rest of our time will be spent understanding the profound truths that are found in these 12 verses. James 3.

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment, for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he's a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

Now if we put bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great, are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire.

[8 : 50] The very world of iniquity, the tongue is set among our members, is that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

For every species of beasts, and birds, and of reptiles, and creatures of the sea is tamed, and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, and full of deadly poison.

With it we bless the Lord, our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth comes both blessing and cursing.

My brethren, these things ought not be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?

Nor can salt water produce fresh? There's a lot there. And let me just kind of summarize this in about five points here, just overview, some initial observations.

[9 : 50] One, the first point, in the first voice, is teachers incur a stricter judgment. And if I had any sense, I'd go sit down right now. Anybody who stands up and speaks publicly, teaches publicly, has to understand the weight of that verse.

By definition and occupation, a teacher uses many words. It's a dangerous place to be, and should not, and cannot be taken lightly.

The second truth in here in verse 2 is only a perfect man doesn't sin. With his mouth. Said another way, everyone at some point sins with their words.

A third observation, the person who controls their mouth or their words controls their whole body as well. Fourth, no one can tame the tongue.

And the fifth observation is, tame the tongue. There's a paradox. No one can do it. We must do it.

[10 : 55] So to impact, or to illustrate the impact of a controlled and an uncontrolled tongue, James uses some everyday, for the readers of his letter, illustrations that the readers of his letter would have readily understood to make the point that the tongue is a very small piece of the human body in comparison to the entire body, yet it controls the direction of the entire body.

In fact, the direction of life. So James 3 illustrates three ways. He talks about the bit in the mouth of the horse. You heard me read about that.

I'm not a big horse race fan, but I have watched the Kentucky Derby. And in the Kentucky Derby, there's a weight limit of 126 pounds for the jockey.

That is a very small man. He rides on the back of this wild creature that can go in excess of 40 miles an hour. How does he do this?

Well, he does it how any other rider does it, with a bit in the mouth of the horse. And that bit is only about five inches wide and weighs less than one pound.

[12 : 12] And that is placed in the mouth of the horse, or it can be synthetic material. It's placed in the mouth of the horse in the region where there's no teeth. So it's in the back of the mouth.

And it's held on the horse's mouth with something called a bridle. And with that small piece of metal, that 126 pound or less man strapped to the back of a wild creature controls that horse going over 40 miles an hour.

That is what James is using as an illustration of how small that object is to control a large animal. He talks about the rudder on the back of a ship.

A rough rule of thumb is that the rudder should be 2% of the underwater profile of a boat or ship. I didn't know that. I had to look that up. You consider an aircraft carrier.

Many years ago, I was one of a bunch of people that were the guest of the Secretary of Defense in the United States. And part of that for 12 days was jumping into a fighter jet and being flown out into the middle of the Pacific and landing on the back of an aircraft carrier.

[13 : 20] Spent one of the most amazing days of my life in that land, just landing and taking off on the aircraft was amazing. but then touring that ship.

Part of that was going down to the engine room and seeing the size of the engine. That aircraft carrier was driven by two 747 engines connected to four propellers.

Each of those propellers are 21 feet across. That's a two-story building. Four of those things on the back of that aircraft carrier. So massive, massive propellers.

They weigh 30 tons each and the propellers are connected to engines that drive them and all of it is controlled by a person up in the tower. You have to take an elevator all the way up to the top to the top of the tower where we watched jets land and take off every two or three minutes.

And in there is a lever that a man was pulling to steer the ship. A ship that's 1,000 feet long. That's 10 football fields long. It's six stories tall, 100 stories long.

[14 : 35] It has a flight deck of four and a half acres and the steering is accomplished by two rudders that are 20 feet by 20 feet. Tiny compared to the rest of that ship.

That is the picture that James is drawing here of such a small piece of metal directing such a massive, massive structure.

And that is the power of the tongue. He also talks about forest fires. Ann and I live in Southern California. I always say it's the land of riots, earthquakes, floods, and fires.

And this time of year, every year, we have fires. Years ago, our home was nearly destroyed by a fire. The ignition point was somebody playing with a match on the side of the hillside across the canyon from us.

That match happened to ignite a little bigger than expected, caught the grass, and that fire raced down the canyon in the midst of Santa Ana winds, whipped around the canyon, and came right up behind our house.

[15 : 42] How small a spark can start a very large, out-of-control fire. 30 years ago, I was a volunteer fireman, and I saw firsthand the conflagration created by a single, tiny flame.

Every devastating forest fire or wildland fire is traced to a very small ignition point, and that's the picture that James is painting in the book of James 3.

So you have the bit in the mouth of the horse, you have a rudder in the back of the ship, you have a forest fire, and you have the tongue in the mouth of a human being. And there's endless stories of people whose careless or intentional harmful use of words have caused enormous suffering and lit their life on fire and usually lit other people's lives on fire also, shipwrecking their own reputation, and they've run full speed into peril.

Those who've been the victim of slander of a false rumor and outright lies know the truth of Jonathan Swift. He said this in 1710, falsehood flies and truth comes limping after.

Or Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1859, he preached a sermon and in that sermon he said a lie will go around the world while truth is still pulling its boots on. That was before the internet.

[17 : 11] He understood that. So let's talk about the battle, the futility of the battle of no one can tame the tongue. Verse 8, no one can tame the tongue.

I read it to you, it is a restless evil full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father and with it we curse men who have been made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing.

This is the tension of James 3. With your words you alternately bless the Lord and you curse men. From the same mouth. James 3 presents that tension that we all live in.

A person who cannot tame the tongue isn't saved is really James' message as is consistent with the rest of James. James is laying out what Christianity looks like and to the extent he or she thinks they are they are deceived.

And why do I say that? It's because verse 26 of James 3 says if anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

[18 : 20] What you say reflects your spiritual condition. It's either or. James says in verses 11 and 12 that a fountain cannot send out from the same opening both fresh water and bitter water.

Excuse me, bitter water. A fig tree cannot produce olives. How do you know it's a fig tree? Because there's figs on the tree, right?

That's what James is saying. How can you tell if somebody is religious? You listen to their words. Salt water cannot produce fresh water nor can fresh water produce salt water.

This is all picturesque language to illustrate the point that the source of your words, your heart, that's the issue, not the small physical body part, the tongue.

Your words reflect your heart. All right. So let's talk about, that's kind of the doctrine of the tongue from James chapter 3.

[19 : 25] Now let's get practical. The Bible lays out in several places how you should use your tongue, how you should use your words. And I'm going to go through those really as a setup to make the case to you for when you should be silent.

You see, taming the tongue sometimes means just being quiet. And we'll get there in a minute. But first, let's start with the obvious. How are we to use our words?

And probably none of this will surprise you, but we'll just review this. And there's about 10 of them. We're going to go really fast. The first is to confess Jesus as Lord. Romans 8, excuse me, yeah, verse, excuse me, chapter 10, verse 9.

If you confess with your mouth, you heard that, with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that he was raised from the dead, you will be what? Saved.

That's a good use of your tongue, of your words. If you have not done this, by the way, I would be remiss to not pause and tell you there is no higher or more consequential use of your words than to confess Jesus as Lord with your mouth.

[20 : 39] Another use of your words is to teach God's word, and we saw this last night in Deuteronomy 6, verse 7, you shall teach the Bible diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise

up.

We saw this morning, Hebrews 13, 7, that we are to speak the word of God. Obviously, that is how we should be using our words. A third way is we are to speak of God.

We are to speak of God. Psalm 71, verses 15 to 18, my mouth shall tell of your righteousness and of your salvation all day long.

for I do not know the sum of them. I will come with mighty deeds of the Lord of God. I will make mention of your righteousness, yours alone. O God, you have taught me from my youth and I shall declare your wondrous deeds.

And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me until I declare your strength to the generations, your power to all who are to come. We are to speak of God.

[21 : 55] Fourth, we are to speak truth. Ephesians 4.25, and maybe this is a good verse to gauge all communication. You know, at our church this week we have been dealing with what do we say and how do we say it because of issues that are going on.

And Ephesians 4.25 has come up a lot. Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor. For we are all members of one body.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor. For we are members one of another. We are, and then Ephesians 4.29, a few verses later, same thing.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such as a word. Here's the checklist if you want one. As is good for edification according to the need of the moment so that it gives grace to those who hear.

another. That should guide our speaking. We are not to be silent all the time, but when we talk, we should be, our words should be used for edification or building up.

[23 : 06] According to the need of the moment, if it's not needed, it doesn't need to be said, and giving grace to those who hear. Another use of words is to warn each other, to admonish each other.

Colossians 3.16, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom teaching and admonishing each other. That is not a verse for pastors, that's for all of us.

And we saw that in our session this morning. Singing is a great use of your tongue. It goes on in Colossians 3.16 with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Another use of our tongue is to express thankfulness. Whatever you do, Colossians 3.17, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Ephesians 5.19, sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[24 : 12] Christ. We should be using our mouth to pray. First Timothy 2, first of all, then I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men.

The tenth one is confessing sin. We are to use our words. James 5.16 says confessing our sins to one another and praying for one another so that we would be healed.

There is healing in confession of sin. And we could find more. That is a really fast overview of what the Bible says about how we should use what God has given us and that is a voice.

So there are religious sects historically who have taken a vow of poverty and silence. And that is not biblical.

I think I just made that case. We're to use what God has given us. Silence is not how we should live our life. But these ten uses that I gave you are pretty unique to believers.

[25 : 19] And God gave us the tongue. He told us how to use his tongue. But we're not, we are completely unable to comply without his saving grace.

So we've covered a lot of scripture. But hopefully you have a picture of the nature of the problem and the solution and the evidence of your heart condition is provided through your words.

And with that in mind now, having said how we should use our tongue, I want to talk about the case for silence. And I'm going to call it the discipline of silence. And the application of this is that as your kids come into the social media age, as they get that smartphone and they want to start engaging on social media, there is a discipline of silence that would demonstrate a level of maturity that most of their peers certainly wouldn't have and maybe even a lot of adults don't either.

If you do a word study on the concept of being silent, silence, and no words in the Bible, you'll see it as often an expression of humility, wisdom, chastening, it's a form of worship, and it's even an appropriate response in the face of persecution.

And now I have to be careful, I'm telling you this after I gave you all the reasons why you should say things. And there are good reasons to say things. And there is no command in the Bible ever telling us not to use words.

[26 : 59] In fact, it would be a waste not to use our words, but as you consider your contribution and as you train your children to consider their contribution to public discourse, especially on social media, I want us to consider the place and appropriate place of silence.

One of the things I always think, I run a business, a couple businesses, and as we hire people, and maybe some of you are involved in this also, we get a resume or an application, one of the first things we do is go look at their social media history.

And so often as we review that social media history, I think, oh, I wish somebody had taught this person to be silent. That there may have been a context where they thought this kind of presentation was appropriate or needed, but in the context of the larger life that they're trying to live and maybe even pursue now as they've grown up a bit, what they said follows them around.

The consequences sometimes of speaking are unfortunate. So, again, I'm not saying social media is necessarily evil because it's amoral also, but what I am saying is our children need to be prepared for the world that they're entering where they will have a platform that no other generation ever has had.

And the first instinct on receiving a text, an email, a tweet, a Facebook comment, a TikTok is to respond, to reply, to say something.

[28 : 43] And the software is designed, by the way, to feed that instinct. They've made it very easy. And I'm saying that our first instinct maybe ought to be silence.

In Ecclesiastes 3.7, it says there is a time to be silent and a time to speak. We've already seen when is a time to speak. Now let's look at four instances when it might be time, it is time to be silent. The first one is in worship. This one's probably pretty obvious. But we've seen that speaking the word of God, singing, worshiping together, expressing thankfulness, interacting with one another at church, it's all part of the corporate worship experience.

But we need to consider what it says in Ecclesiastes chapter 5. I'm going to read this to you, verse 2. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth. Therefore, let your words be few. For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words.

[29 : 51] That is a caution that is expressed in the greater context of Ecclesiastes 5 of worship. Let your words be few.

You also consider worship in heaven. In Revelation 8, the context of Revelation 8 is that the world is in the midst of the future tribulation when wrath and judgment is being poured out by a holy and angry God on the earth in a way that's never been seen before.

And in verse 1 of chapter 8, the book of the seven seals has just been opened and what that is it is a picture of what is coming.

The six seal judgments have been unleashed on the earth and the seventh seal is broken revealing the seven trumpet judgments. And at the moment the seventh seal is open, Revelation 8 says, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

That silence in heaven can only be described as an expression of hushed humility and awe as the angels saw what was coming.

[31 : 06] And you can read about the rest of those judgments, what they were in Revelation 8. They represent a display of a celestial power and expression of pent-up holy wrath like the world has never seen before.

And that's on the heels of a display of wrath and judgment already seen. And throughout heaven, the response to seeing what was coming was dead, complete silence.

Silence in worship is appropriate at times. Other places in Revelation, it speaks of the angels singing in worship. There are times to be quiet.

This is why at church at times there are moments of encouraged silence and reflection. It's important to be silent before the Lord. It's also why when your pastor or anyone else is preaching like you are now, the rest of us are silent.

Right? It's out of respect for God's word. It's an expression of submission, interest, and even worship. I think it's good for us to be reminded of that. That silence at times is an expression of worship.

[32 : 20] The second is time for silence is to protect my own ignorance, my own foolishness. Now, for a moment, I want to point a harsh finger at you and me.

Listen to 1 Peter 2.15. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. We can't miss this point. Ignorance is best when it is silent.

The Bible speaks a lot about silencing ignorance. And who among us is not ignorant? People who have not considered their own ignorance about circumstances or situations and people usually are verbose in expressing their opinions and thereby getting or putting on display their own ignorance and foolishness.

You see this when you see people commenting publicly about a situation that you happen to know the facts about. And there's everybody responding to the first ignorant statement.

And they're all, of course, just as ignorant because they're assuming the ignorant statement was true. When you read something on the Internet, you should probably assume that what you're reading might be incomplete and it might be inaccurate.

[33 : 42] Or at least uninformed. You might also assume that you don't know all the facts. It's a safe assumption because it's largely true.

That should guide the use of your words and the desire to respond publicly. This is true also interpersonally. I learned a long time ago that 1 Corinthians 8 is true.

You read the first five verses of 1 Corinthians 8 in accountant speak, I'll call it. It says, you don't know what you think you know and what you think you know you probably don't know.

And you probably don't know what the other person knows. people. And what in the whole point of that in 1 Corinthians 8, it goes on, the reaction to that is stop judging people.

Stop correcting people, assuming you know what you think you know and not knowing what you think you know and not knowing certainly what they know.

[34 : 43] It's so wise. Proverbs 10, 19 says, when there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he restrains, he who restrains his lips is wise.

You see, you can maybe be ignorant and be quiet and you might look wise. Proverbs 11, 12, a man of understanding keeps silent.

Proverbs 17, 27 and 28, he who restrains his words has knowledge and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Even a fool when he keeps silent is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent. There it is again. You want to look wise?

Be quiet. Ecclesiastes 10, 12 to 14, words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him.

[35 : 42] The beginning of his talking is folly and the end of it is wicked madness. Yet the fool multiplies words. Do you hear that? Words put a lot on display.

The lack of words can hide your own ignorance and can also, because it is wisdom to be quiet when you don't know what you're talking about.

It can make you look wise, when in fact you might be ignorant. So silence is sometimes necessary in worship.

Silence helps hide our own ignorance. Third, silence is a good response to the foolishness of others. Silence is an appropriate response to the foolishness of others.

There's simply no better example or understanding of this concept than the story of the God of the universe coming to earth fully man and fully God and being subjected to the foolishness of his own creation.

[36 : 51] If Christ can subject himself to his own creation and not sin with his mouth, we would do well to study his life and words and learn.

It is amazing to me to consider Jesus Christ coming to the earth and lived an entire life in the circumstances that he lived in and you know that he never once sinned with his mouth.

Amazing. In Matthew 26, 59 to 63, it records this. When the chief priests and the whole council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, they're trying to murder Jesus.

Verse 60, they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on, two came forward and said, this man stated, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.

The high priest stood up and said to Jesus, do you answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you? Verse 63, but Jesus kept, anybody know?

[38 : 09] Silent. In fact, in Isaiah 53, and by the way, he was put to death. Isaiah 53, 7, hundreds of years before that event, prophesied this.

Jesus was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shears, so he did not open his mouth.

That is what was prophesied about the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and that is exactly what happened when Jesus Christ was on this earth. Why didn't Jesus say anything?

Well, we learn elsewhere in Scripture that he did it as an example to you and I. Let me repeat that. Why would Jesus come to the earth, get accused in a crazy, fake trial to murder him and not defend himself?

[39 : 09] 1 Peter 2 explains that. Verse 21. For you have been called for this purpose since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps.

Did you hear that? This is what he did for us to follow in his steps. Verse 22. He committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth.

Yet while being reviled, he did not revile in return. While suffering, he uttered no threats, but kept entrusting himself to he who judges righteously.

The example for us to follow is silence is necessary, a necessary response in response to the foolishness of others, and even in the false accusations of others.

There was no deceit in his mouth. He did not revile in return. He uttered no threats, and he left his defense up to the righteous judge.

[40 : 17] That was a hard, hard example to follow, but that is what Christ did. That is why he did it, and that is another reason that we worship Jesus Christ.

The fourth reason to stay silent is in response to conflict. Proverbs 26, 17, like one who takes a dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him.

I think I was telling one of you in one of the many conversations today, we were talking about what I said last night about we read with our daughters. We read through Proverbs every day, and Proverbs 26 would land on the 26th of the month.

In one month, one of the girls asked, what does that verse mean? So I called the dog over. His name was Buckley, and he thought he was getting scraps off the table, so he jumps on my lap, his tail's wagging, and I grabbed him by his ears.

And he did exactly what the Bible said he would do. He reacted the same way people react when you meddle with their strife that doesn't belong to you.

[41 : 30] He wiggled. He bit. Dog never bit. He was not happy. It was a great illustration. It was a fun dinner that night. But if the single verse was followed, most social media would die from lack of content.

Like grabbing a dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him. It would do well to teach our children to stay out of other people's problems, wouldn't it?

It's a practical wisdom of life. This is wisdom for the ages. 2 Timothy 2.24 says the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome.

It's that simple. Mind your own house. Save your words for your own troubles. And then the fifth one, the fifth reason to maybe pull back and be quiet is when you think there's a need to teach.

I've heard a lot of people tell me, young people in particular, that the social media platform is a great way to teach the Bible, to share a Bible verse. It's a platform to teach, to speak of God, to preach the gospel and speak truth, to admonish and even pray for the world to see.

[42 : 49] And I think that could be a noble effort. If you see yourself as someone who needs to and wants to influence opinion that way, to correct error, to spread the gospel or otherwise be a positive influence on the internet, you've placed yourself in the position of a teacher, haven't you?

And yet, what did James 3.1 say? Let not many of you become what? Teachers. Knowing that as such, we will incur a stricter judgment.

This is a clear and a compelling warning. And I can stand here in front of you or tell you that standing here having taught for an hour or so, that probably for every hour I'm up here, it represents

about 30 hours of preparation.

Now, I'm not the sharpest tool, so that's probably longer than it should take. You might say it needed more, by the way, and we can talk about that afterwards. The point is, to presume to speak the word of God or otherwise teach requires careful preparation.

We have to handle the word of God accurately and carefully. The content is extremely important. I must rightly divide the word of truth. That's a command from Scripture.

[44 : 10] The presentation is also important. I want you to hear it. I want you to understand it. I want you to be able to apply it. And all of that takes time and prayer and effort and thinking and writing.

I wonder why it would be any different on the Internet. And yet, all too often, we read something and inside 30 seconds, we think we have the right response and the right Bible verse and the right application and we push send.

Now, some people can do that and they're good at it and they can get away with it. I think it's extremely dangerous in light of James chapter 3 verse 1. I would argue that we would all do well to stop and consider the content of what we're saying and the presentation of what we're saying and is it accurate, is it right, and is it appropriate?

We need to guard the tongue. The battle is real. And even with a sanctified heart, you and I are still sinners and it's an area where there's hope if we're saved, but it can also become an area of great trouble and struggle in a moment of not being careful.

It seems to me, unless it's your job to interact on the Internet, and that's a hard job, it's best to default first to silence, the discipline of silence.

[45 : 36] To have, when I say the default of silence, I'm not saying to silence yourself, but that the first instinct is to pull back and think. Is this what would be helpful, what would be accurate, what would be useful, and what would honor the Lord?

And sometimes the answer is silence would do all of that far better than what I would say. May the Lord be honored and his kingdom advanced by what we say on social media and perhaps what we do not say.

And that really is the fifth big point of James 3, which is tame the tongue. Teachers incur a stricter judgment. Only a perfect man doesn't stumble in what he says.

If you can control the tongue, you can control the entire body. These are all the lessons of James 3. Nobody can tame the tongue. I think that's a warning for all of us, that this is an area that you must be vigilant.

You can never, ever let go. And ultimately, the command is that we need to tame the tongue. That is a lesson that as parents we need to know, we need to understand, and that is the disciplines of communication that need to be passed on to our children.

[46 : 56] Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the clarity of your word. Lord, I pray that the clarity of your word might not have been confused by me, that what has been said here would impact families, impact our culture.

Lord, help us to use our words in a way that advances your kingdom, that reflects well on you, that honors you, that praises you, that worships you. And Lord, we want to use what you've given us in all of that, in the way you designed it, the way you purpose it.

Thank you for your word. In Christ's name, amen. Amen.