

Taming the Tongue

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Now how many of you guys know that this hole in your face has the power to completely destroy lives, right? Such a small thing within this hole that flaps when you get excited, when you get sad, when you get angry, it flaps a lot. Open, close, open, close. There's this little thing inside and it's this little red thing and it flaps too. So you have this big flapper with a little flapper and the whole thing's just that big. And it can cause so much damage, not only to your life, but to every single person that you come into contact with. If you use it incorrectly, you can literally destroy other people. You guys know this, right?

The Evil Tongue

In Judaism, they have this concept called *lashon hara*. It's the evil tongue, the evil speech, right? Whenever you gossip or you slander. And scripture talks a lot about this. And sometimes we ignore it. And I know that sometimes we do teachings on all kinds of historical context and history and what the Bible means when it says this and Paul and all this mess. But I wanted to do something a little bit more applicable this week. Is that okay? If you have your scriptures, please turn with me to James chapter three. I might have to use my phone for my Bible, so don't feel offended if you see me pull out my phone. James chapter three, and we'll just sit there for a second.

You see, the one thing that we have to realize... When we're speaking with our mouth and the words that we use and the intentions of the words that we use, we have to realize that it's so easy to trip and fall. And there's a lot of potholes that we can trip and fall on this road called speech and communication. And so James begins talking about this very subject in [James 3:2](#): *For we all stumble in many ways.* We can just stop right there and we can just all together, amen, right? *We all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says

with his mouth, in his speech, in what he speaks, he is a perfect man. Able also to bridle his whole body.* Just to bridle it up. Oh, thank you. Put the bit in the mouth and steer the whole body. Are you perfect? Are you perfect? This is when we get to engage each other, right?

Controlling Your Speech

It's amazing because what James is insinuating is that if you could control your mouth—not your actions, not the things you do—just this little thing that flaps, if you can control this, you have the potential to be perfect and holy before God. If you could just shut up, right? Isn't that incredible?

Potholes in Our Speech

Some of the potholes that we've learned about and we probably know about on this road of communication that we're constantly traveling. Scripture talks about slander. That's a big pothole. You could really mess up if you start slander. It's really easy to fall in that hole. *Hey, did you see what he said, she said, she did, he did? You know what? I hear that he doesn't have a good reputation or I hear he doesn't have a good character. Hey, I heard that he talks like this to his family when he's not at fellowship or whatever.* Lying, that's a big one. Sometimes we don't think about that when we speak about our speech. Lying. Gossip, none of us have to worry about that one, right? Oh yeah, we're going to hit this head on here in a minute, guys. Bragging or gloating about your self-accomplishments, scripture talks about that. Don't do that. Complaining, that's a big one. Complaining, quit complaining about stuff. If you're upset about something that's going on, then that is when action needs to follow, not yapping. Get involved and help find a solution for something instead of bringing up a complaint over and over and over again. No one ever does this with me, right? Of course not. Disparaging remarks, being critical of others. We have to be very careful. When we're looking at our brothers and sisters in the fellowship, sometimes we look at them and we compare ourselves to them, and when we compare ourselves to them, then in one way or another we start to look down or up to them, and then we start to criticize them, and then we start to inject our own opinions in them, how they should be conformed more like us, and how we see a standard should be filled, and we become critical of others. That's a pothole that you can destroy your life and others with. Discouraging. Discouraging others. Making remarks. Not necessarily bullying, but yeah, bullying. See, we're supposed to be encouraging each other as a body, right? Thank you. We're supposed to be encouraging one another, okay? Not discouraging one another. If someone wants to have a Bible study or study a certain topic, you need to encourage them to grow deeper

into the word. If someone wants to praise and worship a certain way, if someone wants to get up and dance or swing a flag around or do something, you need to encourage them in that. If someone feels like they have a problem in their life and they want to find support in the fellowship for that, you need to encourage them in that. You have the power to speak positivity into someone's life, and it is a huge, huge deal. We'll finish this. Profane language. That's not what you think it is, by the way. We'll get to that. And not following our word. Fits of rage. Anyone ever hit a pothole in their speech before? Fits of rage is fun because those are those potholes that you didn't even see coming, right? Like you're driving and you're just yakking and you're becoming frustrated, right? But you're driving straight, no potholes in the road, right? You can't see anything. And then someone just says something to you that you just perceive as the stupidest thing that could possibly be said in a conversation that you're already irritated in. And then all of a sudden this pothole comes out of nowhere and you hit it with your car and you just... Anyone ever hit a pothole? Fits of rage.

A Small Fire Sets a Forest Ablaze

Verse 3: *If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their entire bodies as well. Look at the ships also. They are huge and large, and they're driven by strong winds, yet they are guided by a small itty-bitty rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.* Itty-bitty rudder right here. Small. *So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!* That's so true. Light a match and just drop it on the ground. A dry leaf might catch on fire, a little fire. But then there's other leaves, and there's other leaves, and then there's a tree, and then there's a forest, and then everything's burnt up and it's spreading, getting bigger and bigger and bigger. *And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting afire the entire course of life and set on fire by hell.*

So can we put this in perspective? So that word *hell* there, if you watched our afterlife series, we touched on a little bit of Sheol and Gehenna and how the topic of Gehenna kind of evolved from the Valley of Hinnom and a place that was specifically formulated and culturally evolved and thought as a place where the evil and unrighteous people went and burnt. The tongue is like a lighter. And so I want you to take a lighter and I want you to imagine just a flick of lighter, just a little lighter, no big deal, right? And then I want you to think of a lighter that was formed in the depths of hell. And when you strike it, fire from hell pops out of it. That's your tongue. You were equipped with one of those.

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