



WEDNESDAY EVENING

AT BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

Title: Taming the Tongue

Passage: James 3:1-12

Speaker: Pastor Dan Preston

Introduction: During World War II, the phrase “Loose lips. sink ships” wasn’t just a clever saying—it was a matter of life and death. A single careless word about troop movements or supply routes could find its way into enemy hands, costing countless lives at sea. That slogan reminded people that what they said mattered, because words had real consequences. And the same is true for us today. The tongue may be small, but its impact is enormous. One harsh word can wound a spouse, one sarcastic comment can crush a child, one bit of gossip can destroy a friendship, and one angry outburst can damage a testimony. James 3 reminds us that the tongue is one of the greatest tests of true faith—because if we can control our words, we can control ourselves. Real spiritual maturity shows up in how we speak.

I. The Serious Responsibility of the Tongue (Verses 1-2)

To teach is to influence, and to influence is to be accountable. Words shape minds, stir hearts, and sometimes alter eternal destinies.

Every believer who speaks for God bears the responsibility of speaking truth with humility and care. Words can build faith, but they can also sow doubt. Words can point people to Jesus, or turn them away from Him.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” (Proverbs 18:21)



WEDNESDAY EVENING
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“...Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36)

“...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matthew 12:34)

The tongue isn't just a matter of personality or temper—it's a matter of spirituality. To control your tongue, you must surrender your heart.

II. The Destructive Power of the Tongue (Verses 3-8)

A. Like a Horse's

Where your tongue goes, your life follows. If you want your life to move toward godliness, start by surrendering your speech to the Holy Spirit.

B. Like a Ship's Rudder

In the same way, our lives are pushed by circumstances we cannot control: the winds of pressure, temptation, and emotion. But our tongue acts like the rudder—it determines where we end up.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

C. Like a Spark of Fire

In the same way, a single careless word can burn down a reputation, a friendship, or even a church. A single word of gossip, one angry remark, or a false accusation can set off flames that spread faster than you ever imagined.

“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out...” (Proverbs 26:20)

D. Like an Untamed Beast

Like a venomous snake, our words can inject bitterness and hatred that lingers long after the moment has passed.



WEDNESDAY EVENING
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What man cannot do through discipline, God can do through transformation. When the Holy Spirit fills your heart, He begins to sanctify your speech.

*“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”
(Psalm 141:3)*

III. The Inconsistent Practice of the Tongue (Verses 9-12)

Every believer battles the inconsistency of a divided tongue because we often forget how sacred our speech really is.

A. The Contradiction of Our Words

How can we bless the Creator and curse His creation? How can we worship the Father and wound those made in His image? When we speak evil of others, we are insulting the Artist by mocking His artwork.

B. The Illustration of Nature

In nature, inconsistency is impossible. Everything produces according to its nature. So if both blessing and cursing come out of our mouth, what does that say about our nature? It means something in our heart needs cleansing.

“Make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matthew 12:33-34)

C. The Call to Consistency

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

Your tongue can either become a tool for healing or a weapon for harm. The difference lies in who controls it—you or the Holy Spirit.



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Conclusion: The truth is, our words reveal who truly has control of our hearts. When we speak without restraint, we show that self is still on the throne. But when our speech is marked by grace, gentleness, and truth, it's clear that Christ is reigning within us. We may never fully master the tongue on our own—but when we daily surrender it to God, He can use it for His glory. So let's leave this place determined to let every word we speak reflect the One who saved us. May our conversations bring healing instead of harm, encouragement instead of criticism, and truth instead of gossip. Because when the tongue is yielded to the Spirit, it becomes not a weapon of destruction, but an instrument of life.



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