

Sunday, August 10, 2025 - BECOMING A TONGUE TAMER – Pastor John Henry Raskin

Today's message emphasizes the importance of controlling our speech and aligning our communication with God's will, continuing last week's message regarding the unreliability of our carnal minds and the importance of allowing the Mind of Christ to guide our responses.

The sermon explores God's design for communication through scripture, highlighting the weight and influence of words on relationships, communities, and how they reveal our inner hearts.

Several powerful scriptures are examined, including **Proverbs 16:1-3**, which illustrates the relationship between God's sovereignty and human faithfulness. These proverbs read together, stress how our words should be seen as instruments under divine stewardship, and that we should seek God's guidance before speaking, especially in challenging conversations.

Proverbs 18:21 and James 3:1-12 emphasize the power of the tongue to bring either destruction or restoration. The scriptures from the Apostle James warn us against gossip, rumors, slander, and other harmful speech, comparing them to a raging fire that can destroy lives and communities.

We also reference Jesus' teachings in **Matthew 12:36-37** and **Luke 6:43-45**, highlighting the eternal importance of our words and the need for our hearts to be aligned with God's goodness always.

Overall, the sermon calls for believers to commit their speech to the Lord, allowing their words to become instruments of grace, healing, and truth.

It concludes with a prayer for God to transform our tongues into channels of His life-giving love.

These practical steps are provided to help us become Tongue Tamers.

1. Daily Devotion

Spend time in Scripture and prayer first thing each morning. Let God's Word set the tone for every conversation.

2. Pause Before Speaking

When emotions surge, take a breath and ask, "Is this word honoring to God and helpful to others?"

3. Seek Accountability

Invite a trusted friend to call you out when your words turn harsh or careless. Then humble yourself and repent, which means turning intentionally from that behavior.

4. Practice Encouragement

Look for the good in a person and intentionally speak praise and affirmation every chance you get. If it is truly and kindly meant it will never appear as flattery.

5. Rely on the Holy Spirit

In your daily prayers, ask God to tame your tongue and produce the fruit of self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

BECOMING A TONGUE TAMER

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we talked about the importance of being aware of the unreliability of our own minds when it comes to how we interact with the world as believers.

We learned that it's important not to react with our carnal mind but to take a moment and allow the Mind of Christ to inform our response by deliberately taking our immediate reactive thoughts captive.

Today we're going to continue in this vein by exploring God's plan for how we should communicate.

Through scripture we're going to reveal God's design for our communication with Him and with each other through the gift of speech.

Words carry weight. They shape our relationships, influence our communities, and reveal the condition of our hearts when we pray.

Today we'll explore several powerful Scriptures to understand the reason why how we communicate matters so much and how we can intentionally bring our speech under God's control.

Let's start by talking about the nature of communication in the Book of Proverbs.

These Proverbs are part of what is known in the Bible as Wisdom literature for a reason.

They are intended to open our eyes to God's perspective of the way to live a life that is pleasing to Him...

Proverbs 16:1

**The preparations of the heart belong to man,
But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.**

As is the case with many of the most powerful proverbs, this one slips by easily without the full weight of its importance being evident upon first reading.

However, as we meditate upon this proverb and look at it in the light of the next two that follow it, we can begin to see the wisdom in it.

Proverbs 16:2

**2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
But the Lord weighs the spirits.**

Proverbs 16:3

**3 Commit your works unto the Lord,
And your thoughts will be established.**

Proverbs 16:1 through 3 read together beautifully illustrates the harmonious relationship between God's sovereignty and human faithfulness.

While God is ultimately in control, ultimately sovereign, He chooses to work through those who are committed to living in obedience to His will.

By seeking His input when we make plans, examine our motives, and ultimately by committing our work unto the Lord, we become instruments through which God effects His perfect will.

This dynamic partnership between divine sovereignty and human faithfulness is a testament to the wisdom and grace of God, who invites us to participate in His redemptive purposes for the world.

Our tongues and most specifically the words that we choose to communicate our thoughts are not mere extensions of our intellect or emotion,

For us as believers, we must recognize them as instruments under divine stewardship.

That is why when faced with challenging conversations we should pause and ask God to shape our response before we speak.

Here is another Proverb that gives us good reason and also great incentive to commit our words like our works unto the Lord.

Proverbs 18:21

**21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit.**

This proverb emphasizes the potent influence of our words highlighting that they can bring either destruction or restoration.

This proverb tells us that those who use their words carelessly, or with malicious intent will ultimately face negative consequences, while those who choose their words wisely and use them for good will experience positive outcomes.

This proverb leads us naturally to the expansive comments of the Apostle James about the power of the tongue.

As the rest of the epistle of James does, scriptures that we're about to read focus on the demonstration of genuine faith through actions not just words and is a guide for practical Christian living.

James begins...

James 3:1

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

I need to stop here for a moment.

It is not lost on me that this scripture begins by admonishing those of us who have been given a burden to teach as well as lead the flock.

Beloved, please know that I take this Word of the Lord very seriously, knowing that the words that I speak to you will receive a stricter judgment if I use them heedlessly or in error and for that reason now, I would like to pray before we continue...

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer...Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips...enable me to speak only what is true so I don't stumble or cause others to stumble in what I say.

Use my words to build up and not tear down. Forgive me for any ways by which I may have harmed people in the past with my words. Help us now to hear your word by the power of Your Spirit. In Jesus' Name. Amen.”

James continues...

James 3:2

2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

Although certainly none of us is a perfect person, as believers in Christ, we all know the One who was (and is) perfect.

To the extent that we are able to control our tongue, James tells us that we are able to keep our lives in balance and control.

The phrase he uses is “to bridle” the whole body. He goes on to expand upon that metaphor in the next two verses...

James 3:3-4

3 Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

Here James sets the stage for just how important this little muscle in our mouths is because it forms the words which can in turn affect our lives both worldly and eternal.

As the proverbs that we just looked at indicate, it is certainly possible for man, who has free will, to speak outside of God's perfect desire for his wellbeing and to his own detriment.

James points out that this little tongue of ours is like the bit that an experienced rider uses to control a powerful horse,

or that it is like the small rudder underneath a ship by which an experienced captain can turn an enormous ship by just a few small turns of the wheel.

However, in order for us to be successful riders or captains of our own lives, using this little instrument the tongue, we really should turn it over to the Lord.

James shows us next that just like the carnal mind is in enmity against God, the tongue left to its own devices can be used for great harm and often is.

James 3:5-12

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

These are strong words!

Here James shows us that like an inexperienced rider, or the captain of the Titanic, left to our own devices, using this instrument without instruction and thinking we know better than our Creator we can destroy our entire lives and those of the ones we love in a forest fire sized conflagration.

We're not talking just about using foul language here which is obviously sinful and which makes the speaker look like a poor witness to those around them.

We're talking about gossip, rumors, slander, false accusations, lies, evil speech... all these things can stain and pollute and destroy a whole family, a whole group of people, a school, a church, a community.

Think of the incredible damage that gossip can do.

Gossip is like a raging fire.

Whatever gossip does not consume directly it stains with smoke so that it is impossible to remove the stench.

We have good friends who recently lost their family home in the Eaton fire.

They could have rebuilt it but it was fouled so much by smoke and pollution from burning chemicals in the neighborhood that it could never be reclaimed.

Gossip and slander is like that. It has the ability to destroy lives and pollute them with an irremovable stain.

And lest we think of James' words here about the tongue being able to destroy as any kind of exaggeration,

Jesus' words in red in the Gospel of Matthew are also intended to make us aware of the eternal importance of how we use our tongue.

Matthew 12:36-37

6 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

James goes on to demonstrate just how helpless we are to control this instrument without humbly seeking God's instruction.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Note that James says no man can tame the tongue.

Remember Proverbs 16:3. That is why we commit the works of our speech to the Lord. It is then that He will establish our thoughts.

James goes on to reveal that it is really the inner heart of a person by which the tongue speaks.

James 3:9-12

9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Jesus spoke this truth that James echoes here...

Luke 6:43-45

43 “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Now just to be clear, Jesus is not saying here that a good man is someone who is perfect like God but rather he is describing someone

whose heart is aligned with God's goodness allowing him to produce good actions and words.

Herein lies the key to how to relate to both God and other human beings made in God's image.

We are to seek God's righteousness in all that we do and all that we think and speak as well.

Jesus modeled this for us when he was tempted by Satan.

Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus quotes God's Word to counter temptation. Just as physical food sustains our bodies, Scripture nourishes our minds and governs our speech.

The more we feast on God's Word—its truth, love, and purity—the more our language will reflect His character.

When trials stir anger or fear, a heart well-fed on God's Word recalls Scripture instead of lashing out.

Ephesians 4:29 is a great tool to memorize and meditate upon so that it will become a part of who you are in Christ.

Ephesians 4:29

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Here are some practical steps that you can use that have helped me over the years...

Practical Steps to Control Our Speech

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Spend time in Scripture and prayer first thing each morning. Let God's Word set the tone for every conversation.

2. Pause Before Speaking

When emotions surge, take a breath and ask, "Is this word honoring to God and helpful to others?"

3. Seek Accountability

Invite a trusted friend to call you out when your words turn harsh or careless. Then humble yourself and repent, which means turning intentionally from that behavior.

4. Practice Encouragement

Look for the good in a person and intentionally speak praise and affirmation every chance you get. If it is truly and kindly meant it will never appear as flattery.

5. Rely on the Holy Spirit

In your daily prayers, ask God to tame your tongue and produce the fruit of self-control (Gal. 5:22–23).

Our speech reveals our hearts and reflects our source of nourishment.

When we feed on God's Word and submit our tongue to His guidance, our words become instruments of grace, healing, and truth.

Let's commit today to lean on the Lord for every utterance, asking Him to transform our tongues into channels of His life-giving love.

And now... Let's pray.