

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Scott Kedersha
Series: Sticks & Stones
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The Danger of Our Tongues
James 3:1-12

Welcome, everyone. My name is Scott Kedersha, and I'm really glad to be here with you this morning. My wife Kristen... We've been married 19 years. We just celebrated that a couple of weeks ago. Kristen and I moved here from Dallas, and we're thrilled to be here in Waco and at Harris Creek. We probably haven't met, so this is kind of a way for me to informally meet a lot of you.

We moved here with our puppy, who's a boy, and four boys, so we have a really testosterone-filled home. A little victory last night. I'm all in with Baylor. We just moved here. I have my Baylor green shoes. I bought these years ago. A little bit of a prophetic purchase, maybe, that I'm all in here in Waco and with Baylor.

We have what you would imagine a boy home would look like. Is our home loud? Just come hang out for five minutes, and you will learn how loud the Kedersha house is. Is it smelly? Yes, it is at times, and that's even before we added the boys and the puppy. I could take credit for that. And is there a lot of wrestling? Yes, there's a lot of wrestling all the time.

With the wrestling often come broken bones. I don't know where this falls, if this is a lot or a little, but it feels like it to me, especially financially. We've had five broken bones in our home. One of them goes to our youngest who's now 11. The other four belong to our third child, who is now 13. He's in the eighth grade, and he has broken a bone in his body four times.

Twice he broke his right wrist. He's right-handed. That was really fun. One time he fell off the monkey bars. Another time I think he was on a swing. He broke his left wrist. I have no idea how. I can't remember. There are so many of them. My memory doesn't work like it used to. But the most recent injury was to his left upper arm.

He was at a friend's family farm, and they were on go-karts. I think we have a picture of Carson on there. There he is, looking really sweet and cute, a seventh grader on his go-kart. They've been using these for years and years on their family farm. Nothing has ever happened to anyone except for this child. He goes over a little hill, lands in a little rut that was caused by some warthogs. Some hogs dug a little hole. So, the wheel lands. The thing turns over and flips on top of him.

We're fortunate all that happened... It's not minor, but he kind of snapped his left upper arm. So, that's really fun when you start middle school, junior high as a seventh grader and you have a cast on your whole arm. He'd just made the basketball team, so that's really fun. So, he has this cast on. That's how his seventh grade year started. The good thing is he has fully recovered.

A couple of months go by. He gets to still be on the basketball team. The first game back, he has an almost fully functioning arm. He's back, and I'm excited. He actually blocks a kid on the other team, and in the moment, I'm standing up. I'm like, "Yeah! In your face, dude! He just broke his arm, and he just stuffed you." So, I'm talking trash to a seventh grader on the other team, which is a little competitive problem in me, maybe. But he's fully functional.

Now he's in eighth grade and doing great. He can dribble with his right, his left. He can beat his old man in basketball. There are no residual impacts of this injury. Now, go back in time a little bit when I was in seventh grade. That was not a couple of years ago. That was 35 years ago that I was in the seventh grade. I had a couple of injuries that were different in kind than Carson's, but unlike Carson, who is now fully recovered, I am not fully recovered from these injuries. These injuries came in the form of words from other people.

Seventh grade. I'm a little bit bigger in size. I'm a good first baseman defensively. I could hit the ball pretty well, but I was so slow. Coach Brenrod and Coach Gurney are the coaches for seventh grade baseball at Newtown Junior High. I start running the bases, and all I remember is "Kedersha! Get that piano off your back! You are so slow!" Needless to say, I did not make the baseball team. They weren't looking for any first basemen who were ridiculously slow. Most people could walk faster than I was able to run. That has stuck with me.

The other thing that happened in seventh grade... I'm in the boys' locker room, again, in middle school, junior high, when people are oh, so kind. These eighth graders (we'll call them eighth grade bullies) come up to me. I had taken my shirt off. I'm changing, and they start pointing at my chest and laughing. I always had a little extra fat here. They looked at me, and they go, "Hey, bro. You're not supposed to be in *this* locker room. With those puppies, you should be in the girls' locker room."

Thirty-five years later, I still remember exactly what that moment was like. I know I'm not alone. We all have been on the giving side and the receiving side of dangerous words. Maybe you didn't get laughed at on the baseball field or in the locker room like I did, but you've been the giver and you've been the receiver. Maybe it's a roommate of yours who has said, "I guess we were just raised by different families, because we do things really differently," which means, "I do things right and you do things wrong."

Or maybe you're a parent and your child says to you, "I hope I'm never like you when I grow up. I can't wait till I get to leave this house." Maybe you're a parent and you've said to your child, "I wish you were never born. I wish I could give you back." Or to your spouse, "The biggest regret in my life is saying 'I do' to you. I want you to know that when I get up in the morning and I leave the house and go to work, that's the best part of my day. The worst part of my day is when I have to walk through the doors when I get home."

These are not just things I made up. These aren't things I've said, but I've heard them, and the things I've said are equally harmful and dangerous. We all have been on the giving side and the receiving side. We are in the middle of a series called *Sticks & Stones*. We all hear it. I remember hearing it as a young kid. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

"Words will never hurt me. Words will never harm me." What a bunch of garbage. It's a lie. We've all seen broken bones and scrapes and wounds that are now healed. There might be a scar, but the cut is healed. The wound is healed. The joints work. The bone isn't broken. But we all have cuts and scrapes and wounds and brokenness from words that have come to us from others.

Last week, Nate did an incredible job talking about the weight of our words. If you haven't heard it, please go back and listen. I've watched it multiple times and each time have been moved so much and impressed upon just the weight of our words. Today, we're going to talk about the danger of the tongue. Why did God give us this tongue, this little piece of flesh in our mouth? What does God's Word say about our words and about our tongue?

There's a lot of danger in this little set of muscles he has given us, so we need to know how to use this thing in the right way. God's Word is filled with wisdom about the tongue and about our words. We're going to look at a chunk of Scripture in James, chapter 3, verses 1-12. We're going to see that the tongue is *powerful*, the tongue is *destructive*, and the tongue is *revealing*.

Let me give you a little background on James just in case you don't know who he is and why you should care. It's an inspired book in the Bible. This is God's Word. James was the half-brother of Jesus. He probably died around AD 62. This book was written in AD 49, they think. It may be the first book written in the New Testament.

The book is an incredibly practical book filled with great wisdom. Essentially, the theme of the book is that James is encouraging us to be consistent in the way we live, that we read what God's Word says and actually live it out in our actions, in our character, and in the words we use. Specifically, in this chapter, we talk about this consistency between who we are and what we say and how we use our tongue.

James talks about the tongue a few times prior to chapter 3. In 1:19, a verse that is so easy to memorize but impossible to apply, he says, "Let every one of us be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry." A few verses later, he says if anyone is unable to control their tongue, it's basically like they have a worthless religion, a worthless faith. So, he continues again this theme of letting our actions and our faith and our words match up with who we say we are.

So, we're going to go verse by verse through this chapter in verses 1-12. It starts off in verse 1: **"Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers..."** So, he's writing to believers. **"...because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."** This is one of those verses, as a teacher of the Word, I wish I could get rid of, because it means I'm held to a higher standard. I'm held more accountable.

Any of you, if you're teachers, if you're speakers, or whatever, you are held to this higher level. That's what James says. He goes on to say, **"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check."** Here's what I love about this book and about this passage. James is an amazing teacher. He gives us all of these illustrations to help us understand what God wants us to know about the tongue.

So, teachers, you're held more accountable. In verse 2, it's an equalizer. It says, "**We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.**" We don't usually do this, but I'm going to give you a little out right here. If you are somebody who is perfect in what they say, if you don't stumble or struggle with your words, you have permission to leave. You have permission to turn off the livestream.

So, anyone who's perfect, be free. Then, if you are going to leave or turn it off, we're teaching on pride next week, and I invite you to come back. Every single one of us stumbles in what we say, how we say it. It says, "We all stumble." There's another *we all* in the Bible. I mean, many of them, but "We all have sinned and fall short of God's glory." That's in Romans 3:23. The same thing happens here with the tongue.

Not one of us is exempt from the truth of this passage. We all struggle in the words we say, in the danger of the tongue and of our words. We're held accountable. We all sin in the ways we speak. So, this is a passage that is an equal opportunity application for every single one of us. For the better part of the last 15 years, I have worked with couples, helping them communicate better with one another, to not struggle as much in their words.

If anyone in this room should be an expert in this, it should be me, and I want you to know I struggle mightily when it comes to the tongue. This week, as I have gone through this passage so many times, it has been incredibly convicting. I know the Lord loves me. I know I am forgiven through Christ for the things I have said, the way I've said it, but this applies to every single one of us.

James goes on. He says, "**When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.**" The average horse... I had to look this up. I've been on a horse one time in my life, and I will never, ever do it again. We did not get along well. We'll just say that. The average horse is somewhere between 840 and 2,200 pounds. That's a typical range. That's a large range. I don't ever want to get on a 2,200 pound horse. That's for sure.

But the average horse is about 1,000 pounds. Does anyone know what this is? It's a bit. This is attached to a harness. It goes around a horse. This part right here actually goes in the mouth of the horse. The average horse is 1,000 pounds. I have a little scale in my office, and this thing weighs 10.2 ounces. That's less than one pound. This less-than-one-pound piece of metal is able to steer and control a 1,000-pound horse.

He goes on to say, "**Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.**" The first thing I want you to see with the tongue, with the bit, with the rudder, with our boasts...

1. *The tongue is powerful.* A bit controls large animals. The rudder of a ship, although it is very small in size compared to the ship, controls the direction it goes. The *USS Eisenhower* is an aircraft carrier. It's 1,100 feet in length. That's over three football fields long. Just try to get a picture of that. It carries over 100 aircrafts, and 6,100 people can call that aircraft carrier home. That's large. It's 91,000 tons. I'm not a math guy, but 91,000 times 2,000 is a whole lot of

pounds, yet this rudder that's less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the size of that ship can determine what direction it goes. Two times James tells us a small part has a big influence.

He goes on then to talk about the way we boast with our tongue. "The tongue is a very small part of the body, yet it boasts of great things." Look, y'all. We like to boast. We like to brag about stuff we've done and who we are and our accomplishments and our stuff that we own. Oftentimes, they're kind of subtle flexes. They're not big deals, but we'll say things like, "Sorry I'm so tired this morning. I ran 26 miles after my CrossFit workout yesterday."

"I'm sorry I missed the party on Friday night. My daughter is all-state, so we have to go on these trips to go cheer her on. She's all-state, you know." Or we say things like, "Oh, I got 100 on that test. I barely even studied." Or we say, "I'm a graduate of Texas A&M. I'm an Aggie." That is not something to brag about. Okay?

Jeremiah 9:23-24: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom nor the strong of their strength nor the rich of their riches, but let those who boast boast in this one thing: that they know God and understand that he is Lord." We see in this chapter, in these five verses, the tongue is powerful. Whether it's the bit in the mouth of a horse, a rudder on a ship, the way we boast... Our words have enormous power.

Unfortunately, the way it's written, this isn't always a positive thing. In fact, it's usually negative. It's that we exert power in a negative way with our words or we boast in a negative way that takes the attention off of God or others and onto ourselves, but it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, I'm so grateful there's power in the tongue.

Do you know that the world was created by the power of God's words? In Genesis 1, he created the heavens and the earth with his words. He spoke them into being. While you and I don't have that same power, we do have the power to do something that's different than the rest of the world. This tongue God has given us that is incredibly powerful can lift others up and encourage them. We all need to be encouraged.

Ephesians 4:29 is a verse that is literally chalked on a chalkboard in our house that we rehearse on a regular basis with our family. **"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."** We have this powerful tongue that can be used to lift others up.

We get discouraged so easily, and we see from Paul in this verse, "Use those words to encourage, to build up." In fact, I think a question that would help us tremendously if we asked this question before anything we wrote, anything we typed, anything we said... "Is this word going to tear down or build up?" I think if we asked that question, it would radically change the way we live. It would radically change the way we receive words from others. "Am I going to tear down or am I going to build up?"

James goes on to talk about the tongue in verses 5b through 8. In verses 5 and 6, he says, **"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a**

world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." Happy words to us from James.

2. *The tongue is destructive.* I remember some friends of mine... I often work with newly married couples, and I've seen the way words are often used destructively in couples. So, this sweet couple, very good friends of mine... When I met them, they were newlyweds. I don't like gender stereotypes that say all guys are one way, all women are another way. I just think they're false, but there are a few things...

If you can imagine what the stereotypical couple looks like, that's this couple. Super girly; super masculine. Pink; blue. Emotional; zero emotions ever. That's this couple. They come to me, and they're like, "Hey, we just got into this fight, and here's what we got into a fight over." The woman says to the guy, "I am a delicate flower," and he responds, "A delicate flower? That's ridiculous. That's so stupid. I don't even know what that means, and if you're a delicate flower, then what am I?"

Tears coming down her face, she goes, "You are a lawn mower who destroys delicate flowers." The tongue, like my friend, is destructive. Four inches long. Eight muscles in there. You don't need to get a gym membership to work this thing out. There's no CrossFit workout for the tongue. We exercise this thing all day long. James continues to give us these powerful illustrations with the tongue. He goes on to say it is like a small spark that starts a fire.

Right now in California, Oregon, the West Coast, fires are just devastating the whole West Coast. They can't even control them. They're out of control all over the place. One of the larger ones actually started at a baby reveal party. So, a gender reveal party. This couple has some friends over, and they get this pyrotechnic device that's designed to either emit blue smoke for a boy or pink smoke for a girl. It goes off. I don't even know what they're having, but a little spark comes off that machine and starts a fire that is uncontrollable.

Now 22,000 acres have been destroyed by this fire that came from a spark from a gender reveal party. Someone has died in the midst of it, a firefighter trying to control the fire. We see this small spark that starts in a really benign way. A gender reveal party. It's supposed to be a great celebration. This small spark starts a fire that devastates and tears apart and even leads to death. James, who is this amazing teacher, gives us this illustration that that's what our tongues are like.

A few months ago, we're in Dallas packing up before we come down here. Just a busy couple of weeks getting our stuff packed up, and I said to one of my sons in a very unimpressive parenting moment... I looked at him. He was probably playing Fortnite or watching TV, and I'm like, "Bro, there's so much to do right now, and all you're doing is playing games. You are lazy and selfish." Just not helpful.

It's not true. He's not lazy, he's not selfish, or he is, just like I am or like the rest of us are, but I called him lazy and selfish. Little did I know that two of his brothers were right around the corner listening. A few days later, I heard them go up to this other brother and say, "Hey, you're lazy and selfish. I think it, and Dad says it too." In that moment, it's just this perfect illustration of what happens with a spark.

A spark from me caused a little fire. I thought it was a contained fire between my son and me, but it's not only my son and me. Now it's between father/son and between brother/brother and between father and brother, like, "You don't repeat what I say." So, this little spark that's not even true... Hurtful words go to my son who go to his brothers who now come back to me, and I don't even know if that's where it stops, because maybe that tape keeps playing in his mind of "My dad thinks I'm lazy and selfish."

It goes from "My dad says I'm lazy and selfish" to "I must be lazy and selfish; therefore, I'm going to be lazy and selfish." It's a small spark that causes a fire, and I hate it. I hate that those words came out of my mouth. This week has been heavy for me as I've sat in this text and thought of not as much the things people have said to me but the harmful words that have come out of my mouth.

And just application for you guys. I know we've all been on the receiving end, and there is some work we can do when we're on the receiving end, but this passage is not about the receiving end; it's about the giving side of this. We need to be careful about what we say, because our words are destructive.

He goes on to describe a zoo. He says, "**All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.**" James tells us we can go to the zoo. We see parrots who repeat back what we teach them. We see elephants who can put their front feet on a little stand. We see lions fly through fiery hoops. We see snakes charmed.

I'm not interested in any of this, but we've seen it all. We can tame creatures, but James says we can't tame the tongue. It's untamable. The only person who has ever been able to tame their tongue is the Lord Jesus Christ. The rest of us have this tongue we cannot tame, and if something is not tamed, it's the opposite. It's loose, and it runs wild.

Instead of being contained and subdued and controlled, our tongues are on the loose and are wreaking havoc. They're causing destruction...the words we say, the way we say them. It's why we lie and why we steal and why we cheat and why we deceive and why we cuss and why we yell. It's because we cannot control this tongue. It's 70 grams. It's less than .01 percent of the average body weight, yet it causes all kinds of devastation and destruction.

Just like our tongues can be powerful in a positive way, our tongues can actually be destructive in a positive way as well. We can use our words to tear down lies that others say or believe. Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "**We demolish arguments and every pretension [or thought] that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**" When our friends and family are down and need encouragement and they believe lies about themselves, we can actually speak encouragement to them.

This week, I walked in here on a Tuesday morning just down and heavy, and I didn't know why. A friend, a coworker, put his arm around me, encouraged me, asked me what was going on. I told him I was just believing some lies, and he spoke truth into my life. He tore down those lies.

We took those lies captive to the obedience of Christ. In that moment, my friend used his words that can be destructive to destroy the lies we believe. We get to play that role with others.

3. *The tongue is revealing.* "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water."

The tongue is revealing. Over and over and over, James is saying your faith and your life need to match up with your words. We see that in here. What are we going to be like? We're in here a few moments ago, and we're singing "Raise a Hallelujah." We're going to sing a couple more songs after I'm done. We're going to praise. We're going to sing, "May God's praise ever be on our lips."

So, we're going to sing, we're going to praise, and then we're going to get in our cars and we're going to cuss the driver next to us. We're going to be mad at somebody because they didn't pull out in the right way. We're going to get in the car, and we're going to get mad at our spouse or frustrated with our kids. We're going to watch a football game today, and we're going to watch our team lose, and the words that are going to come out of our mouths are not going to be consistent with the praise we uttered in this room a few hours earlier.

We are walking contradictions. One of my children, who I love dearly, yesterday was wearing an Alabama hat and watching Auburn play football on TV, and he was cheering for Auburn. I'm like, "You are a walking contradiction right now. You can't cheer for evil Alabama and good Auburn at the same time. You've got to pick one or the other." We're these contradictions. We're the same way. We're walking contradictions. We praise God with our words, and then we cuss the people God has put in our lives who are made in his image and likeness. It is not to be so.

Then he says, "Does a fig tree bear olives? No. Does a grapevine bear figs? No." What he's saying there is the words that come out of us are indicative of what we are. It makes no sense to claim that I am a follower of Jesus Christ, that Jesus died on the cross for my sins, not because I deserve it in any way but out of his kindness, grace, mercy, and forgiveness... I'm claiming this, but I lie and slander and cuss and yell. I'm a walking contradiction.

So, what comes out of us is indicative of what we are. This is just hard to hear. I mean, the truth hurts. So in this I go, "What are we and whose are we?" Because if we are redeemed followers of Jesus Christ, if we realize that Christ died for our sins, that changes everything. It changes our eternity. It changes the way we act, the way we live, and what we say. So, if there are words that are coming out of our mouths that do not lift up...

I'm not talking about one time. We all fall short, but if repeatedly it's just yuck that comes out of your mouth, if it's anger and yelling and cussing and slander and lies and all that comes out is evil, it should force us to look back and say, "What am I? Am I really forgiven? Am I really a redeemed follower of Jesus Christ?" If we are, if we are followers of Christ and it's not consistent, we have some work to do.

That's when we go back to the *Conflicted* series and learn to say these words that are really difficult to say: "I am so sorry for the time I yelled. Son, I'm really sorry for calling you lazy and selfish. That is not who you are. That is not how I see you. Will you please forgive me?" We have some work to do when what we say does not match up with who we are, and it's plain in the text.

Just like we turn it around with words being powerful for good and destructive for good, words can be revealing for good, because when good comes out of us, it allows us to share the hope we have in Christ. It allows us to encourage others, to reveal what's really going on in my heart. Even though I'm having a tough day, I'm going to encourage others.

I'm going to put their needs before my own. I'm going to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility I'm going to consider what you need more than what I need. What we say can reveal the good that is inside of us. So, the tongue is powerful; the tongue is destructive; the tongue is revealing.

Over the last 15 years, I have worked with thousands of couples...pre-married, newly married, couples that just want to grow, couples that are in crisis. I can't tell you the number of times I've seen where the tongue has torn apart a relationship. I've seen the way the tongue carves the pathway to divorce. I've worked with couples that have never walked through infidelity, have never had any kind of physical abuse, but they're now divorced or miserable together because of the sins of the tongue.

It starts off small. We just start shedding sparks, and it causes destruction. I've seen it so many times. We see wounds that have not gone away because of the destruction of the tongue. Candidly, we often think it's not that big of a deal. Right? It's just words. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Like it says in 5b, **"Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark."**

So, we use our words, and we just start shedding sparks. We might say to somebody, "Why are you so lazy?" or "I wish you were a little bit more like your sister." "I see what the freshman year has done to you. Freshman 15 is real." "Quit being such a coward on the court! What am I paying all this money for? Use your skills and shoot the ball!" "I hate you." Over and over and over, we send out sparks.

"Why do I even try? You'll never get it." Spark. "You're so stupid." Another spark. "Shocking. You're sitting down and doing nothing." You have another spark. These sparks that seem so harmless cause trouble. It's a small spark that leads to a fire that destroys relationships. It destroys families. It destroys relationships between parents and children, between husband and wife, between roommates, between coworkers. It leads to divorce. It breaks churches apart. We're just using words.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." It's a lie, because our words have power, our words are destructive, our words are revealing. I want to leave us with this thought: those words can be used in a way that builds up and sets fires in a positive way,

when we need to hear hope. 2020 is a dumpster fire. Right? It has been a rough year in so many ways, and we need to be encouraged. People need to hear hope.

Where are they going to get hope from? It's not going to be from Netflix. It's not going to be from sports. Your teams are going to let you down. It's not going to be from your grades, from achievement. We need truth to stir us up and remind us of what's right and true. People need to hear hope, and we get to use our words to provide hope. We get to use our words to share the gospel with people who are dying physically and figuratively.

We get to use our words to show honor to others. We get to use our words to spur others on to love and good deeds. We get to use words to remind us of what's right and true. Small example. A couple of years ago, I'm with Kristen, and our marriage is in a good spot. I'd probably give it a B+. Most people would be really happy with that. I'm a marriage pastor. I go, "B+ is not good enough. We've got to have an A+."

I found myself using these words and keeping track of wrongs in our marriage. I didn't have a list, but all I kept doing was noticing all of the things Kristen did wrong. I decided to turn that around. For one year, literally 365 days in a row, I wrote down one paragraph in a journal of something about my wife that is unbelievable. They were small things, and they were big things. I kept a list of rights instead of wrongs.

For 365 days, I used my words to build up. Now, I gave that journal to her at Christmas, and she can't read it. My handwriting is terrible. I can barely read it. The gift is not in the words. She's not sitting there reading the words and what I said, but it changed the way I thought about her. Don't ever say anything bad about Kristen Kedersha. She is unbelievable. Apart from Jesus, she is the greatest gift I have in my life.

It's not because she did anything different during those 365 days. It's because a spark went off in my heart and started a fire where I started to see the good in her, not all the wrong. So, our words, whether we write them, say them, or type them, have enormous power. They can be destructive to break down lies, and they can reveal the truth people so desperately need to hear, that you and I need to hear.

Then we get the privilege to pray with and for others. We get to use our words to lift up others who need to be encouraged, who need hope. I'd love to pray that we would not use our tongues in ways that are destructive and powerful and revealing that tear others down but build others up and that our words would actually give God the glory he deserves.

God, thank you for the truth of this passage. Thank you for the fact that you've given us this tongue to be used for the good of others and for your glory. God, we need your help. *I* need your help. My flesh, my tongue, wants to use it to build myself up and tear others down. I pray for me and everyone in this room, everyone streaming, everyone in Stage 2, that our words would be used to bring you the glory you deserve and to help others, to encourage others. We need it. Thank you that you've given us this thing in our mouths that is powerful and destructive and revealing, and I pray it would do everything right for your glory and for the good of others. In your name we pray, amen.