

James 3:1-12 | Noah Agnew

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Yes, I brought visuals for this one. It's a pleasure to be here as always. And before you think I'm crazy for bringing up a bit and bridle,! If you want to turn to James chapter 3, and if you read the title of it, you'll know why I brought that up here.

While you're doing that, I'm going to go ahead and just go before the Lord one more time in prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before you. Lord, this prayer is mostly for me. Lord, as we talk about taming the tongue, I pray that you would tame my tongue this morning. Father, that I would not speak anything that you do not want me to say, Lord, and that it would be edifying and encouraging and bring you glory in all things. And it's in your Son's name we pray. Amen.

So, I think out of the sections of James to speak on, this is probably one of the easiest. James in itself is a pretty straightforward book. Do this thing, do that thing, do this thing, do that thing. It's pretty straightforward. But basically, the overarching theme of this section we'll be reading, which is verses 1 through 12, is just don't say bad things. Don't teach false doctrine.

[1 : 08] I'm done. That's the message right there. No, but to just give a brief overview of James, so we have a little bit of context, because I think it's always important to look at what the author is trying to say to his audience.

We want to keep in mind that the book of James is written to primarily believers, people that should have known the Word. He's a leader in Jerusalem. We get that from Acts 12, 15, and 21.

James is also the brother of Jesus, being that leader in Jerusalem, so I think he is more than qualified to speak on these things, being so close to the Lord. The book was written about, like, between 49 and 52 A.D., and James was martyred in 62 A.D., thereabouts.

The big overarching view of James is a picture of faith and what faith should produce, and that's no difference in this section.

By our faith, our tongues should be different. The way we speak should be different because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So now that we got that little bit of review out of the way, let's go ahead and dive right into this reading of the Scriptures.

[2 : 20] James 3, verses 1 through 12. It says, Not many of you should become teachers, my brother, for you know that we who teach will be judged by greater strictness.

For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. For if we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well.

Look at the ships also. Though they are so large and driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder, wherever the will of the pilot directs. 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! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting it on fire, the entire course of life, and is set on fire by hell.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed, and has been tamed by mankind. But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a relentless evil, full of deadly poison.

[3 : 35] With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. For the same mouth comes blessing and cursing, my brothers.

These ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grape brine produce figs?

Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. So this section is actually the longest topic that James spends on, is talking about taming your tongue.

It actually goes from about chapter 3, verse 1, all the way to chapter 4, verse 12. He talks about quarrel, warning against worldliness, and all of that.

So he's talking about our speech for quite a while in this book. It's probably because it's a crucial part of what it is. In order to preach the word of God, in order to share the gospel, we have to speak. [4 : 34] We can read about it and all this other stuff, but we are commanded to go forth and tell all nations about the Lord Jesus Christ. So we have to speak in order to do that. So our tongues is a very important thing.

Also, our tongues, our words, lining up with our actions is very important. If you say something and then do something else, nobody's going to trust you, and we see that throughout your lives. I'm sure you've met people like that. I'm sure you've seen influencers or whoever. They say something and then do something completely different. When we're reading this, I think it should automatically bring us back to chapter 1, verse 19, where he says, My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this.

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. So again, James bringing in all of these things into a cohesive message of faith and how we should act in all of these things.

Obviously, our speech is a powerful force. I know that I've said things that I've regretted, and I've said things that I didn't even think would mean something but meant something to somebody else. [5 : 38] In fact, I was just in the kitchen with Milo, one of the young boys that lives there at camp, and he mentioned something that I said offhand that I don't even remember saying, but he remembered it.

I don't want to say what it is because maybe it was bad, maybe it was good, but he remembered that. So our voice, our words, what we say is very powerful. So of course, we should guard them, and the Lord wants us to guard them.

We all know the saying, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. And I think we can all agree that it is a very bad saying. All of you have been in an argument where those words probably hurt than a punch to the face sometimes.

And it probably sticks with you longer than that pain from a punch to the face. I did some digging because I was like, is that the whole saying or is there something else behind this? I did some digging, and I ended up on archive.org, a place that I never thought I would be.

And I found out that the first recorded instance of this saying was from the Christian recorder back in March 1862 by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

[6 : 46] He was talking about this in the midst of the Civil War, about how sometimes people will say things to us and we have to let that slide. African American men, we have to let that slide in order to do what is right.

Well, obviously, he's talking that to inspire people to shrug things off and to do what is right, to free the slaves and everything. But we all know that words can hurt very much so as well as our actions and everything.

As we go and we continue on, you'll see some very hefty illustrations that James gives on the weight of our words and how much power they actually hold.

So let's just start diving right into the text of verse 1. Verse 1 actually starts off with a warning to teachers, to people who are speaking to the masses.

It says, Not many of you should become teachers, my brother, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. So I don't know if you guys want me to be judged greater or not, if you're asking me to speak, but it's true of everyone.

[7 : 48] At some point in your life you have taught your children or somebody else the word of the Lord. I hope you have. That is our charge. I know the people that have done Sunday school, those who teach will be judged with greater strictness because you are being the mouthpiece for God to lead people to His glory, to His love.

And we should be judged for greater strictness. We look at politicians, we look at people who do speaking events, and we judge them with a strictness. We see that, we hear their words and sometimes, a lot of times, their actions don't always meet up.

So they should guard their words more carefully, right? How much more should we guard the word of the Lord with our speech? Now, it's not just talking about speaking.

You should have the technical skills to speak as well. You should have the knowledge and everything to speak. Those are important, but this is talking about more or less the words that you are speaking and the weight that they carry.

We can always train to become an elegant speaker. We can always train to use big words like supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. We just watched Mary Poppins, so that's the word that came up in this.

[8 : 59] Selah loves that movie. So, you can train to do all of those things. You can practice. You can rehearse. Shoot. There's been a lot of preachers that have been exposed for just using AI and regurgitating what AI has said.

And you can sound eloquent. You can sound like any preacher you want to. But, if you are not speaking the truth, if you are not speaking in love, those words mean nothing.

And in fact, they can have more damage and greater damage down the road if you are found out to be, one, speaking lies, not speaking in the truth or not speaking in love. We all know examples of people that have had that happen, whether it be a public figure or somebody in our own personal lives.

It puts into a great perspective the weight of teaching and the privilege that it is and how we should take it seriously. And the Lord takes it very seriously. In Ezekiel chapter 13, verse 9, it says, My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lie and deception.

They will not belong to the counsel of my people or listen to the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, sovereign Lord.

[10 : 16] I don't know about you, but I don't want the Lord, the hand of the Lord against me. I want him with me. So I want to speak true. In 2 Peter, chapter 2, verse 1, it says, But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you who will strictly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

We have to recognize that false teaching and speaking lies is not something new. It happened in the very beginning of time. It happened in Genesis. It happened shortly after Jesus died that there were false teachers in the church.

It happened before Jesus even came that there were false teachers in the church. This is something that has been going on forever and something that we definitely need to guard our own hearts and minds, not against just other people, but also us ourselves.

In the day of information, it takes a lot of effort to find what is right, what is true. And I can tell you and I can guarantee you the one source that is always right and true is the scriptures. So get your information from the scriptures and use other things to help with that, but don't take those things as gospel.

AI is a great tool. AI is great to help you with preparing a message. AI is great for helping you come up with analogies and all this other stuff. But if you just take that for what it is, it's not going to be the same as taking the scripture and actually relaying the truth from the scripture, not from something else.

[11 : 46] Not everyone is able to teach. Not everyone is made to teach on a regular basis or teach in every aspect. You may be good at teaching Sunday school to little kids, but you may not be good at teaching Sunday school to high schoolers.

You may be good at teaching to your own children, but not to everybody else's. Though not everybody is made to teach, we should all be able to teach. We should all know the truth and we should all be able to speak the truth.

1 Peter 3.15, it says, But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a response for the hope that is in you.

Yet do it in gentleness and respect. So we should all be able to answer the questions and in a sense, that is teaching somebody. If somebody is asking a question, you're teaching them the response.

You're teaching them, you've studied, you've done all this stuff. You should be able to teach. But the important part is that you should be teaching truth, not falsehood. And you should be doing it in gentleness and respect.

[12 : 51] And we see that our Lord Jesus Christ does that throughout time, that he teaches in gentleness and respect. You may not be gifted in speaking, but that doesn't mean that you're not gifted in anything and can't work for the Lord.

God has given you talents and abilities. It may not be speaking at the pulpit. It may not be speaking at Sunday school. But he has given you talents and abilities to use for him. In 1 Peter 4.10, it says, Each of you has received a gift, which it is to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

So though you may not be speaking to the masses or you may not be speaking to Sunday school or you may not be teaching on a regular basis, there is some ability that you have that the Lord has given you that you should be using to help glorify him.

And that can also be teaching as well. I learned a lot from just watching men and women work on their attitudes and how they did things. Shoot, most of the time when I was working on a car with Jim Fitz or my buddies, I wasn't actually doing the work.

I was just watching them unloosen the bolt, righty-tighty, lefty-loosey, unless it's reversed and then it's, you know, then you get messed up. So, but you watch people and those actions will help teach people.

[14:04] So your actions should also be centered around the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in the context of this verse, I believe he's speaking about a person teaching to the masses.

And we get that from the illustrations. We see a spark in a forest, a forest of people, a rudder on a great ship. We see those analogies given. So, in the context, yes, this has a broader meaning, but in the context of this verse, I think he is talking to individuals, speaking to a group of people or a larger group of people.

And why should every teacher guard their tongue? And that's where verse 2 comes in. It says, for we all stumble in many ways. And I like that he puts many ways. It's not just that we stumble in one way or different ways.

Different things can cause different people to stumble. What you struggle with may not be what I struggle with. And what I struggle with may not be what you struggle with. We can all stumble. And all of those stumblings can cause our testimonies in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be brought down. We've all made promises before. And I'm sure we have all broke a promise before.

[15:12] Whether it be for a good reason or a bad reason. I know that having a kid, you say something and you forget about it and then they bring it up and it's the end of the world. Yes, I said you could have that cookie but I forgot about it.

Now we're gone. Now I don't have the cookie. Now I've got to stop at the gas station and get something to satisfy you because I broke my promise and all this other stuff. Right? We've all done something like that. We've all lied at some point.

And I know we've all lied. I know I've lied when I was younger. I know I've lied when I've been an adult. We've all spoke things that can hurt our testimony. And woe to those who speak a life what they call truth and they speak the word and then you find out that their lives are nothing close to the truth.

The first person that came to mind when I was thinking about this of false teachers, people who proclaim and on the outside look really good was, I'm sure some of you know him, Ravi Zacharias. Ravi Zacharias was a great teacher. He was very elegant in his speech. He was a very learned man. And it came out a few years ago. Actually, I don't know how many years ago.

[16:19] But that he was in deep, deep sin. Not good sin. And I won't dive into it because I don't want to reflect on the sin. But basically, his ministry which spanned thousands, maybe even millions of people was destroyed in a day because he was speaking one thing but doing another thing.

And he did not guard his actions as well as his tongue with that. We see the example of how we should speak to individuals, how we should guard our tongues and how we should be by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not saying that the Lord Jesus didn't say things that were hurtful to individuals. He didn't always say the nice thing but he said what was needed.

We can look at stories like the woman at the well. It probably wasn't nice to hear her sins being called out in front of her. But it was what she needed to hear.

The Lord Jesus Christ said exactly what she needed to hear to bring her closer to him. And we see that the Lord Jesus Christ calls the Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers.

[17:27] Not a nice thing to call somebody. He says that in Matthew 12, 34 because just so you know I'm not making that up. They needed to hear that, right? They needed to know those things.

And obviously the whole idea of the Lord's saying that is to bring redemption, to bring people back to him. We see that the Pharisees and Sadducees didn't. Not all of them.

Some of them did. But we see that the woman at the well had harsh words spoken to her. But she was brought to the Lord Jesus Christ and praised him for that. I was just studying Luke chapter 5, verse 3 for a Wednesday night message and that's when as I spoke this morning that Lord Jesus Christ goes and steps out on the boat.

He performs a miracle, catches a whole bunch of fish. But before that in Luke chapter 5, verse 3 it says he got into one of the boats that belonged to Simon and he asked him to put out a little from shore and then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

This is the creator of the universe. The one who has all authority to lord over everyone and speak as harshly as he wants to to these individuals. Yet he takes a humble approach and sits down and teaches the masses in gentleness and in humility.

[18:44] He has every authority to speak above people. He has every authority to lord over them. In fact, he could have lifted himself up in the air, looked down upon them and just spoke harsh things.

And it would have been what was right. Yet he takes a humble approach, sits down to teach them. I love that personal connection. And that's where I get this also that it's important that yeah, we have speaking at the pulpit, but it's also important to have individual conversations, to have that personal relationship with one another.

Again, these individuals all needed exactly what the Lord said in the manner in which he said it. We should be humble and kind and respectful and in love when we're speaking.

Especially coming up and speaking to the masses, we should realize the weight of our words and the weight that it carries because we are the representation of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he speaks.

When I get up here and when I am preparing for a message, I'm always praying and as many of you do at speak, pray that the Lord would speak through me and that I wouldn't say anything that he doesn't want you guys to hear.

[19:53] And I think sometimes I get into the mundane fact of that, that it's just something that I do, something that I say. You know, this message, studying this, really brings back the weight of it. It's very important that we continue to speak the truth in love and humility and respect.

So we'll get back now into verse 3 and 4 and this is my wheelhouse because obviously it deals with horses and bits and bridles and if you don't know, I work at Turkey Hill and my main job down there is to work with the horses, breaking and training and all this other stuff.

There's a lot of equipment that goes along with training horses. If you don't know what a horse is, it's a really big dog and you basically train them the same way you do a dog except that they're really big.

So, KJ, if you wouldn't mind pulling up this video and I'll talk about that in a second. So, this is one of our horses. His name's Jester. His name, his mom is April.

His name, or his brother's name is Joker, so April Fool's Jester. That's what we kind of tried to go with. But he's kind of a knucklehead. I'm not going to lie. He definitely lives up to his name.

[21:02] But this is an instant where I'm out here in the arena. Thank you, Jordan, for giving me that. I'm out here in the arena and I'm just working with him. Now, he's been ridden a few days beforehand. This is day five or six of riding him.

And he knows what to do. He knows what the commands are with the bit and bridle. But I want to see, I want to show you how he reacts to me asking him to back up. So, KJ, if you would go ahead and play that.

And I may talk a little bit through this. But it's a longer video. So right now, all I'm asking him to do is to back up. And the way you do that is you grab the reins and you pull back. That bit then takes their mouth and pulls it back and is supposed to release that pressure once he takes a step back. Now, obviously, you can see that he's not doing anything. And that's not what we want. We want him to back up and we want him to give in to that pressure. And I know you guys are used to TikTok and all this other stuff.

But when you're working with a horse, it takes time. It takes effort. You can see him tossing his head. You can see him not wanting to do what I want. Now, this does get exhausting on both parts.

[22:12] It gets exhausting on my arms and legs to continue to pull back his head. It gets exhausting on his part to resist that. Right here, we're just doing a little bit of a reset to hopefully

refresh his mind.

Maybe he didn't understand the cue or whatever. But as you can see, he continues to resist. But given enough time, given enough effort, given enough coaxing, he eventually gives in.

All I'm asking is for that one little step. And as you'll see, after this, now that I've got that little step, he may be a little hesitant, but he does it much quicker than the first time.

And again, he's wanting to do his own thing. He's wanting to go his own way. And I know it's a long video, but again, just the gravity of the fact that it takes time to do this.

It takes... It takes... So, a few minutes go by and now he respects the word and he respects the command.

[23 : 30] So we have a bit and bridle here. And I think sometimes we see this message as people just talk about the bit. In reality, you need this whole piece of equipment in order to control a horse.

The bit is obviously a crucial part. This is what goes inside their mouth and what causes that pressure to be put on their mouth to determine whether they want to go right, left, back up.

The reins are what the rider holds and that's the person that is steering the individual. So we look at this and I am steering. He's not 1,200 pounds, but the average horse weighs about 1,200 pounds.

Me, as a 180 pound guy, is directing a 1,200 pound animal with this small piece of equipment. If you were to look at this, you wouldn't say that it's very significant.

You wouldn't say that it's very rugged, per se. You would say that it would probably break if somebody put 1,200 pounds of pressure on this, right? Yet this little thing is able to control that horse.

[24 : 30] And we'll see that James is not necessarily talking about a gesture who is a dunce bucket and is smaller and is easier to control than some horses. There's a, in the Bible, commentary that I read, George Waugh.

It's from The Bible Teaches commentary. This is what he says. The principle is a general application. James is not thinking of a draft horse, a patient draft horse or a docile trap pony, but a scornful charger.

His strength is great, his spirit is indomitable, and it is not a desire to please on his part that motivates his submission, but the bit and bridle in the hands of the Calvary men.

So to kind of give more context of the horse that James is talking about, let's read Job chapter 39 verses 19 through 25. Job 39 chapter, or verses 19 through 25, it says, Do you give the horse its strength or clothe its neck in a flowing mane?

Do you make it leap like a locust, striking terror with its pounds and snorting? It paws fiercely, rejoicing in its strength and charges into the fray.

[25 : 43] It laughs at fear, afraid of nothing. It does not shy away from the sword. The quiver rattles against its side, among with the flashing spear and lance.

In a frenzied excitement, it eats up the ground. It cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. At the blast of the trumpet, it snorts. It catches the scent of battle from afar, the shouts of the commanders and the battle cry.

That's a pretty cool picture of a battle horse, right? I don't know if you've ever had the privilege of being around a lot of horses at a time. We have about 53 head of horses down at camp.

And one of my favorite things ever is when they're all out in the field and you call them in and you hear all 53 horses running to the stables.

It is pounding. It is a deep tone of thumping on the ground. And when they get closer, you can feel the ground vibrating. Now imagine that in a battle scene where they don't have just 50 but hundreds of horses charging after you.

[26 : 45] That's what Calvary men did. They struck fear into the enemies before they even did any battle. That is what James is alluding to. The tongue can be a powerful thing.

And it should be a powerful thing for the right reason. For the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalms 98.4 It says, Shout joyfully to the Lord all the earth.

Break forth into joyous song and praise. When I was thinking about this bridling the tongue listening to the the steerer on the horse who is directing it.

The first story that came to mind in the Bible was the wall of Jericho with Joshua. The Lord gave Joshua a command to bridle his tongue until an appropriate time.

They walked around the walls and then they shouted. You could say, Noah, that's not using his tongue. He's just shouting. I want you to try to not control your tongue and shout at the same time.

Okay? Just have a little imagination with that.

[27 : 43] He bridled his tongue. The people of Israel bridled their tongues until the appropriate time when the Lord directed them to do something and the fall of Jericho happened. The whole city came down.

Great walls came down through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other analogy is a rudder on a boat. And if you've been on a boat you know if you lose steering on a boat there's no brakes on the water.

You're going to go where that momentum takes you. Right? And we can know stories in the Bible where people did not steer their tongues properly. They did not bridle them. I think of Abraham and Sarah when they went to Egypt when he lied about Sarah being his wife.

And there was great calamity that was brought upon Egypt and there was probably a lot of hardship on Abraham and Sarah as well. I think of Bathsheba David and Bathsheba where David doubled down on his sin and just kept continually spreading lies and went into great sin because of that.

They did not bridle themselves. They did not bridle their tongues. And as it says there we can steer the whole body with the bridle. Right? Our tongues what we say is in direct correlation with our actions sometimes.

[28 : 59] If we say something to somebody that we're going to do it we're actually more likely to do it than if we just say it to ourselves. I know that I'm this way when I want to challenge myself whether it's working out or studying or something like that.

If I tell somebody that I'm going to do it I'm more likely to stick to it because I don't want to disappoint those people and I don't want to break my promise. Right? So we should bridle our tongues to steer ourselves to the right things to not speaking false doctrine to teaching to our actions being for the Lord.

And we've come to verse 5 now and it says so also the tongue is a small member yet boasts of great things. I think we've also all been in where we've said we're going to do something and bitten off more than we can chew.

Right? This little thing can get us into a lot of trouble. I know that there's things that I've said that I'm going to do that I haven't been able to do because I overestimated my abilities.

You know? So this little thing can get us into a lot of trouble. I think there's two ways of kind of looking at the next few verses. You can look at it as an individual that inspires the masses or the masses inspire the individual to speak.

[30 : 21] We know that there's a lot of people in a form of power that the reason why they want to stay in power is because they have control over the masses. And we also see the other way around.

The masses control the individual as well. Those are the things that we should be guarding against because who should be in control of us? Who should be that Calvary man on our back guiding us? That is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not ourselves and not anyone else. Not our own ambitions but the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word and His holiness. And it's amazing how such a little member of the body has such great power over the physical beings.

If you've ever been in depression or great sadness and you've gone to a therapist, a lot of times they'll say to tell yourself words of affirmation, to sit in front of the mirror and speak out loud good things about yourself or things that you that are encouraging or whatever it may be.

Saying something out loud has more weight to it than just saying it in your own mind. And that's just a psychological fact. This little thing controls a lot of our aspects. This kind of brings us to the next two illustrations.

[31 : 37] The first two illustrations of the boat being steered and the horse being steered by the bitten bridle can show us how powerful our tongues can be if well maintained and controlled by the right person.

These next two illustrations really talk about a tongue that is not bridled, that is out of control, one that is a consuming fire. In verses 6 it says a tongue is a fire in a world of unrighteousness.

Oh sorry, the last part of verse 5 is how great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire. In verse 6 and a tongue is a fire of a world unrighteous. The tongue is set among the members sustaining the whole body setting it on fire the entire course of life and the fire is set by hell.

We've all spoken without thinking before I think. We've all been in an argument where we just said something and regretted it later. This would happen a lot when I was with my dad.

Just a short recap of that. My dad and I didn't have a great relationship. My dad wasn't a great guy. Most of our conversations ended in an angry shouting match if not physical altercation.

[32 : 53] And I remember in those conversations that I would say things and then go back and think later like why did I say that? What happened? By the grace of God as I got older he helped bridle my tongue and in those situations I was able to restrain myself and hold back.

That hot tingling adrenaline would rush down my body whenever my dad would say something but by the grace of God I was able to bridle my own tongue and not go into sin because of the Lord's help.

Once you get going in an argument like that it's hard to stop. It's hard to bring it back and as it says an all consuming fire here once a fire starts to spread once it gets to a certain point it's almost nearly impossible to stop.

My dad actually used to be a forest firefighter up in Montana and I remember him telling stories about great fires that they would be trying to battle and then they would think they would be winning and then all of a sudden the wind would change or something would happen and this fire would just take over.

He told me one story one time of where he was I think on a 48 hour shift no sleep and he was battling this fire and it was way way off in the distance. He said miles off in the distance and he was at this one place and they were making what was called a fire break which basically means that they were trying to get rid of all of the stuff in the path so that the fire wouldn't jump over that fire break basically.

[34 : 18] And he told me he was so exhausted that he ended up leaning on his shovel and fell asleep. And the next thing he remembers is that it was an individual grabbing him shaking him awake and the whole forest in front of him was on fire.

Now he probably wasn't asleep for more than 10 15 minutes is what he said and from what his buddy had told him but that consuming fire though they thought they had it under control just came as a wave. And that's what our unbridled tongues can do.

There's things that my dad said to me years and years ago when I was eight years old that I still remember clear as day today hurtful words. On the opposite end there are things that people have said to me that are encouraging that are said years and years ago that I remember to this day.

The tongue needs to be bridled because when it's bridled and governed by the Lord Jesus Christ the outcome is so much better than when it is an unbridled tongue. When you're breaking a horse it takes day in and day out of constant training.

You need to continually show them when I pull the reins over to the right I want you to go to the right when I pull the reins back I want you to go back and day in and day out they'll get better and better at it.

[35 : 32] And then maybe you can go a day or a week without riding them and they'll still remember that. But it's never impossible for them to revert back to just being wild and not wanting to listen ever again. That's the thing with our tongues as well.

We can use it continually for good. We continually teach good doctrine. But if we don't use it for the right way, if we don't use it for the right reason continuously, we will revert back to our sinful flesh.

And James in here says let it not be so. Let it not be that from your mouth comes blessings and curses. He wants only blessings to come because that's what the Lord Jesus Christ wants.

He only wants to bless people. He wants to bless people with the gift of eternal life. And how are people supposed to receive that gift of eternal life if you're speaking curses to them at the same time you're trying to preach love and kindness to them?

I know I'm out of time and I'm going over so I'll try to kind of go over this really quick. I know I'm not bridling my tongue in this time right now going over but verses 9 through 10, the last set of verses, we know that we're all sinful creatures and we're going to stumble but it should not be by our own power that we speak.

[36 : 54] It should be through the power of the Holy Spirit. We have two competing natures in our body right now. We have the power of the flesh which is evil, wants destruction and that's what Satan wants.

And then we have that of the Holy Spirit who wants love, kindness and wants everyone to be saved and for him to be glorified. He brings in the trees how they have one nature and can only do one thing.

That's what we should strive towards is that we, our nature of the Holy Spirit is so dominable, is so intertwined in us that that is the only thing that people see.

Not any of the fleshly nature and any of the flesh. Because that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is, is pure perfectness, pure bridal tongue that can speak exactly what is needed to and speaks only truth, never speaks falsehood.

I said this controversial statement and I know you're like, you're talking about bridling tongues and you're about to say a controversial statement. That's not great. I said this controversial statement to our staff one year and let me air it out before you throw me out, okay?

[38 : 04] I said, I don't want Jesus to be first in your life. And I paused and waited to see if anybody was going to throw stones at me. I want Jesus to be the center of your life.

The idea of having Jesus first in your life, and I'm not saying it's a bad saying or a wrong saying, but it makes him just a check mark on your list of things to do. Once I've got Jesus out of the way, I can go about my life.

But if you make Jesus the center of your life, every aspect of your life should be showing the Lord Jesus Christ, should be showing him, and that includes your tongue.

The Lord Jesus Christ should be the one that is on the saddle, holding the reins, guiding you in what you should say and what you should do. And ultimately, your resource should be the Bible itself.

Not a news article, not even an article from R.C. Sproul. It should be the Bible. I'm not saying don't look at learned men and what the Lord has given them insights to, but don't rely on them.

[39 : 05] Rely on the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to him first. And it's going to stink that first time that the Lord pulls back on those reins and tells you, hey, I want you to do this thing, or I want you to say that thing, and you may fight against it.

It may take minutes, it may take hours, it may take days, but I promise you, once you give in and you start listening to the Lord, the easier it becomes. The idea with training a horse day in and day out of the same commands is that the pressure gets less and less.

So by the end of that training session that I had with Jester, if I were to show you it would have been a 45 minute long video, by the end of it, I was barely putting any pressure with my pinkies on that reins to get him to back up.

Whereas before I was using my full strength to do that. I pray that the Lord only has to use his pinkies to bridle your tongue and not his full strength to bring you back. Speaking of that, I'll try to make this short and brief, but this is where the Lord has been steering us lately, as in at camp and everything.

Baby number two is on the way. Super excited about that. Lacey is very pregnant right now. Teddy originally had us speaking the 17th and we are due May 20th and I said, I could probably do it as long as you have a backup just in case.

[40 : 20] So we're having a little girl and you can ask Selah about her name. She can tell you. Or Selah, are you up here? Do you want to tell people what your sister's name is?

You want to come up here and tell people? Okay. All right. All right. Say into the mic. What's your baby sister's name? Haven. Little baby Haven.

All right. You can go back to mama. So we're excited about that. We are excited that little baby Haven will be joining us soon. As far as things at camp, there wasn't a ton of big projects this year. Camp had a lot of bigger expenses come up. Some of you may know the Rockholds, Tim and Trudy. They have moved to Iowa to be around their grandkids, which is great. They're happy for them about that.

And they built a house. And so they owned the house that was there at camp. So camp bought that. So obviously homes are pretty expensive. So that was a big expense. And then there was a few other big expenses that happened.

[41 : 20] And so our house was really the only big budget project that we did this year. That's not to say that we sat around the fire and sang kumbaya. We did a lot of other work. Trust me. The Lord has provided a lot of materials that have been sitting at camp for a while that we were able to use.

Thank you guys for all of the help and the food. I'm pretty sure we just finished all of your guys' food like a couple weeks ago.

So like it was more than enough. We had so many lasagnas. And they were delicious. But we were a little bit tired of lasagnas right now. They were so good. And thank you so much.

There were days where I would go to work on the house at 7 o'clock in the morning. And I wouldn't get done until like 9 o'clock at night. And it was so nice to be able to just take that food, pop it in the oven, and know that something very delicious is coming out.

So thank you so much for those who came down and helped and for the food. If you don't know about camp, there's eight families down at camp. There's myself and Lacey, Bree and Jeremy, Jimmy and Ashley, Steve and Karen, Pam and Rodney, Debbie Williams, Jim Fitzgerald, and Isaac and Crystal Williams are down there.

[42 : 30] And Isaac and Crystal have four kids. Jimmy and Ashley have four kids. And we are all excited for the summer. Are we ready? Probably not. But it is coming regardless.

So we are going to go forth. With my house being the only big budget project this year, I did a lot of horse training this year. I think we broke four or five horses this year, which is a little bit more than normal.

We usually only break about two or three a year because that's all we have. This past year, we actually had eight colts and fillies born to us, which is a lot. We usually only have two to three. So having eight of them is a lot to deal with. So if you want to come down and help me train eight horses in a couple of years, feel free to. Also, some of you know that Lacey is going to school. She's getting her master's in theology. And she just finished up actually this semester. She passed all her finals. She was worried about it. I wasn't because I wasn't taking the class. So but that is going well.

[43 : 31] And we look forward to the next semester for her. She is taking Greek, which is crazy. But it's super nice when preparing messages because I'd be like instead of having to Google what I think the name is, I can just be like, hey, Lacey, what does this mean in Greek?

And she brings me the information. So it's super nice. But those are kind of the updates that we have. Camp is gearing up. We have a lot to do before camp starts, a lot to get ready. But the Lord has provided camp is full.

I think there is maybe one or two beds one week that are available at camp. We were actually 90% full by February, which is the fastest that camp has ever filled up.

And that seems to be happening year after year. We've made room in certain programs and we've made as much accommodation as we can to facilitate as many people as we can.

But those who are on the wait list, we also tell them about camps like Dayspring or KBC or Storybook, those ones that we're associated with. Be like, hey, listen, we'd love for you to come, but these other camps are also available.

[44 : 31] We just don't have the facilities and time to be able to expand that way. Just kind of an update on that. Camp is kind of at that mid-max point. You know, if we try to get more campers, there's a lot of infrastructure that has to be upgraded.

Expansions of like the dining hall, the chapel, septic system, all those things, really big projects. So this is kind of the max right now. And I say this in front of the board member, Jerry. This is kind of the max right now that we can handle.

But praise the Lord that it is filling up and that we have individuals coming. With that, camp can't run on just us eight families and the little kids running around.

So we need staff. And as you guys do for Dayspring and other camps as well, we have staff applications in. But if you want to come down and work at camp, feel free to.

We'll take you. There's going to be something, whether it's picking up rocks from the field. That's what I have to do sometimes. Or if it's counseling a cabin, there's always work to be done. And it is gratifying work.

[45 : 31] The Lord blesses the work and you feel good about the work. So I promise if you come down, it may be hard and you may be exhausted. Your joints may ache, but you feel good about it. I promise. So yeah, that's kind of the update on us.

And thank you again for allowing me to speak and just having this privilege. So I'll go ahead and close in prayer. Sorry for going 12, 15 minutes over. Heavenly Father, we just come before you and we thank you for this time that we have to just dive into your word.

Father, I pray that we would all listen to your commands as you hold on to those reins, as you guide us to go one way or another, that we would bridle our tongues to speak the truth, to speak love and to be humble.

Lord, I pray that we would not take a lot of pressure. Lord, I pray that it would just be a little coaxing. And Lord, that that pressure would get less and less each time. Father, that we would, yeah, just praise your name and love you in all things.

Thank you again for the blessing of Bethel here and this family. Lord, and thank you for the universal church that just supports us in every way. We just thank you for all these things in your son's name.

[46 : 37] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.