

# Choosing My Words Wisely

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if you have your Bibles, look with me this morning to the book of James. I love the book of James. Hope you do. It's one of those practical books that teach us so much about how to live for the Lord Jesus.

And we're going to look this morning at chapter 3, verses 1 to 12. So if you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn there. We're speaking this morning about choosing our words wisely. Choosing our words wisely.

Most all of us would probably admit, some of you wouldn't have to, but a lot of us would admit that if we've had a struggle in life, it's been with our tongue, right?

And I think a lot of times in the church when we talk about the tongue, we think so long as we avoid profanity, that we're in good shape. But that's certainly not the case. There are a lot of ways that you can hurt your testimony and hurt others by what you say.

And so words are very, very important. I want to ask you to look with me at James chapter 3, verses 1 to 12. And here's what we're going to do. And guys in the back, this is my fault, not yours, okay?

[ 1 : 0 6 ] But when we get to the slides, I'm going to change it a little bit. After we read the passage, I'm going to just make the comments as we go, and then we're going to skip those, I think it's four or five points there. We're going to go down to James 1.

Look at that and then the concluding remarks. So if you can do that, good. And if you can't, that's on me. Don't worry about it. I'm not going to sweat it, okay? All right, James chapter 3 and verse 1. Not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment.

Now you've heard other admonitions in Scripture along that same line. Paul makes one in his letter to Timothy. And he warns folk about wanting to presume to be a teacher too quickly, right?

And I think a lot of times when we read that, if you're not familiar with chapter 3, you think, well, what he's doing is he's saying that you're going to be held to a higher standard. Judgment's going to fall on you if you don't accurately teach the Word of God.

And we're worried about missteps theologically and doctrinally, right? So you want to be well-versed in Scripture, and maybe you need to be careful about becoming someone who teaches others the Word of God.

[ 2 : 1 4 ] But that's not the approach that James is making. He gives us that warning, don't be too quick to teach. But he's got another reason altogether in mind. And he's the only one in Scripture that I can think of off the top of my head who makes this warning.

His warning is not because of what they might say when they're standing before their class. His warning has to do with what they'll say when they're not in the presence of their class.

In other words, how they talk to others outside the classroom, outside the church building, outside the pulpit, how they speak to their neighbor, how they speak to folk in business, especially, I think, how they speak to their family and how they speak to their friends and those with whom perhaps they have some kind of disagreement.

So look at his next warning in verse 2. For we all stumble in many ways. And he's talking specifically about the tongue. And I think everybody here, if we're honest, would say at one time or another, we've stumbled in how we use our tongue.

Let me just pause and say, when he talks about the tongue, he's not concerned about this 4 or 5, 6 inch long thing that we call our tongue, that piece of meat that hangs in our mouth, right?

[ 3 : 27 ] He's talking about our speech. It's not our literal tongue that gets us in trouble. That's a metaphor for how we speak, the things we say, right?

So he says, for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man who is also able to control his whole body. I'm going to tell you, somebody who can control their tongue can control every other aspect of their life.

They're not going to be prone most times to give in to sexual temptation. They're not going to be prone to allow their feet to take them places they shouldn't go. If you can control your tongue, I'm going to tell you something.

You've gone a long way in life in becoming the person that God would have for you to become. And then he gives some illustrations that every one of us can identify with.

Look at verse 3. Now, when we put bits in the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. I don't know how many of you love horses, know about horses, ride horses.

[ 4 : 33 ] I'm not in that category. When I was in high school, my junior or senior year, I had a friend who lived on a farm. He had a horse, a couple of horses, and he would invite me out to his house. We'd bird hunt, and then we'd get on those horses, and we'd just ride some.

But he's the one who knew all about the horses. He would saddle it, and he would put the bridle in the mouth. But I was amazed the first time I ever got on the back of that horse, when you had that bridle in that horse's mouth.

This is a big old strong horse, much more powerful than the person on its back, right? No match in strength at all. But you put that bit in the horse's mouth, and you pull those reins to the left, and he'll go to the left.

You pull it to the right. He's going to go to the right. You pull him back, and he's going to stop. That bit controls that huge, huge beast. And he says that's as it ought to be, that rather than the beast control the man, the man controls the beast through the use of the bit.

Look at verse 4. And consider ships, though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot takes them or directs them.

[ 5 : 40 ] I don't know about you, when I think about the marvels of the universe, I marvel a lot of things that probably a lot of you don't. It still amazes me. You can pick up the phone and push some numbers, and somebody talks on the other end of the line, right?

I know some of the science behind that, but it's still just a mystery to me. One of the real mysteries to me, though, has always been ships. To see a ship out there in the ocean. I mean, here's this ship that weighs thousands of tons, right?

And it's loaded with cargo, and it's loaded with passengers. And I understand buoyancy. I understand how it floats. But it's hard to imagine to me that you can propel that ship exactly in the direction you want it to go.

And even before there were motorized ships, when the wind pushed the ships, which is what James is talking about, he says, here's this huge ship. It's loaded down with cargo and with people.

And the captain can stand there with one hand on the wheel, right? And he can turn it one way or turn it to another. And because it has a connection to the rudder, that little small rudder, which weighs absolutely nothing compared to the whole ship, he directs that ship either to the left or right or straight.

[ 6 : 51 ] He puts it exactly where it needs to go. Look at verse 5. So too, in the same way, in other words, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things.

In other words, one of the smallest parts of your body is your tongue, right? It's not nearly as consequential to look at as your eyes or your nose through which you breathe and your mouth or your ears that you hear with or your feet that carry you places or your arms that you're able to carry a load with.

It doesn't look nearly as consequential to be. He says, boy, the tongue boasts great, great, great things. And that's true, isn't it? I want to ask you something.

Listen, don't raise your hand about this. How many of you in the last 10 years have been in a fist bout with somebody? Don't raise your hand, okay? I hope nobody here.

Probably nobody here. Maybe some child here, something like that, right? Maybe you just had a real bad day sometime, okay? But we don't get in trouble with our fist. We don't get in trouble over just the things we think very often.

[ 8 : 07 ] You know what gets us in trouble? One and all, it's our mouth, isn't it? I mean, you think about the troubles you've had most of the time in your life because of the things you've said.

Either arguing with somebody or angry with somebody or belittling somebody or you put your foot in your mouth, you said the wrong thing at the wrong time, and sometimes unaware you do it.

But our mouths are what get us in trouble more than anything else, isn't it? I mean, with the vast majority of people, that's true. He says, so though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things.

Consider how large a forest of small fire ignites. My son, my dad, my brother, and I were going fishing in Washington State probably about 15 years ago.

We booked a flight, and at the last minute we had to change because of forest fires throughout Montana. We had to change our course of action. It burned hundreds of thousands of acres.

[ 9 : 08 ] And that's the point he makes. You just start a little tiny fire, and it gets out of control, and it can destroy a whole hundred thousand acres or more.

Verse 6, and the tongue is fire. He says, I want you to understand, you're dealing with a force to be reckoned with when you talk about a person's tongue. You hear the expression, the power of the press.

They're talking about the power of words. Man, words are powerful. The tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our body.

And listen to what he says about it. Two or three things it does. It pollutes the whole body. You know what something is when it's polluted, right? It's contaminated.

I mean, it's good one moment, but it's turned bad because it becomes polluted, and it's contaminated. He says the tongue contaminates the whole body. It sets the course of life on fire.

[ 10 : 12 ] Can any of you think of some folk, you hear about it now all the time, because of the woke movement. That's a lot of nonsense at times, but I want to tell you something.

There are folks who have legitimately ruined their lives because they spoke things they should never have said. And again, I'm not talking about the modern-day woke movement.

I'm talking about they legitimately destroyed their lives by saying things that should never have been said. Sometimes they breach a confidence. Sometimes they tell a lie.

Sometimes they speak hatefully. Sometimes they speak cruelly. And they have ruined their lives as well as the lives of others.

And so he says it sets the course of life on fire. Many people have ruined their lives because of how they use their tongue. There's a pastor whose name I could call today, and some of you in this crowd, probably not all of you, but some of you in this crowd, a number of you in this crowd, the staff certainly would, would recognize this name because he was considered about seven, eight years ago one of the leading pastors in America.

[ 11 : 24 ] Had one of the largest churches, one of these mega churches out on the West Coast. I mean, it just sprang up overnight, and it was growing by the thousands of folk were attending this guy's church.

But you know what they discovered? They discovered he had a bad mouth. And I don't mean he just used profanity. He did that on occasion, even in the pulpit. But here's the other deal. He had a wicked temper.

And what ultimately happened is he would turn on members of the congregation, turn on staff folk, turn on family, and he would say outrageous things until finally it cost him his church, cost him, I don't even know about his family, but it cost him his church, and the church ultimately collapsed around him.

And so James is right. The tongue, a word of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our body. It pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell.

I'm telling you, you better be careful about what you say because it could be that you're being used of the devil in what you say when you're hurtful with your speech. Look at verse 7. Every sea creature, reptile, bird, or animal is tamed and has been tamed by man.

[ 12 : 38 ] Have you all ever been down to Sea World? Man, they'll get those fish, crazy people will, and they'll hold it out and let those killer whales come and eat out of their hand.

Ralph's not going to do that. But there are folk who will do that, and it's because they have learned they can train those animals to do certain things. You ever seen those guys at the circus? They lay down on the ground.

Or typically they have one of their workers lay down on the ground, and they had that elephant come, and the elephant will put his foot right over their stomach or their back, but he won't put his weight down on them.

They trust that animal because they have trained that animal. They will fight with lions and tigers and that sort of thing. My granddaughter has a way with dogs. She's got a little Australian Shepherd, and she's training it right now, and it can throw up a ball, and it's just a puppy, and it can catch that ball in midair and do all kinds of things.

When she was a little younger, my daughter, not her mother but her aunt, would invite us over, and we'd play games, the whole family. We'd be sitting in the dining room playing a game, and Scout would be in there with her dog, Roxy, a black lab, and she would teach her to do tricks.

[ 13 : 46 ] And she taught her how to sit and how to lay down and how to roll over to the left and roll over to the right and weave between her legs. She would tell her to sit and stay, and then she would take dog biscuits and put them on each paw.

And you could tell that dog wanted those biscuits so bad. And she would walk into another room and tell her, say, leave them, and walk into another room and from the other room say, take them, and that dog would eat those dog biscuits.

One day we're there at the house playing, and she is in the other room, and I can tell she's teaching her to do something. And so finally she comes into the dining room. She looks at me and says, Papa, watch this.

She tells Roxy, Roxy, sit. Roxy, sit. Roxy, lay down. Roxy, lays down. She says, Roxy, and goes, bang. The dog rolls over and sticks her leg straight up in the air, right?

And that's what James is saying. He says, man, you can take an animal, and you can teach reptiles. You can teach through giving them something to reinforce behavior.

[ 14 : 45 ] You can teach birds and animals and creatures, everything in the world. But good luck taming the tongue. Good luck getting control over the tongue. No man can tame the tongue, verse 8 says.

It is a restless evil full of deadly poison. Strong word to use, isn't it? I mean, you ladies, you ever leave poison out on your cabinets for kids to get into?

Of course not. You guys in your garage, you got chemicals you know would harm grandchildren? And you don't leave them within hand's reach, right? You put that stuff up because you don't want your children to be poisoned.

But this is what he says. You need to be aware the tongue is a deadly poison. Man, it's a deadly, deadly poison.

And then he says this, verse 9. We praise our Lord and Father with it, and we curse men who are made in God's likeness with it.

[ 15 : 51 ] Now, just a few moments ago, we sang songs about the goodness of God, and we were praising him. I commented on it in my prayer. I thought the song selection was great, Brian. We talk about praising God and how good God is, and we occasionally listen to a sermon.

You ever been going down the road, you listen to a radio preacher, and he said amen as he's preaching? Well, praise the Lord. Man, that's right. You nailed it. That's good. He says, isn't it amazing?

We praise the Lord with our tongues, and we can walk right out of a room of worship, get in our car. If we're not careful, we'll get into an argument with our spouse or get into a tiff with one of our kids, and we can say awful things, hurtful things, slanderous things.

And then he draws this conclusion. Look at verse 10. Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. Did everybody here agree with that?

You ever seen that be the case? Just nod yes, right? And then listen to this conclusion he draws, because I'm going to tell you, it just breaks my heart. My brothers, these things should not be this way.

[ 17 : 04 ] Now, I want to tell you, we may agree or disagree on a lot of things theologically, a lot of things biblically. I don't think there's a person in this room who would take issue with what James just says.

That out of the same mouth we praise God and then turn around 15, 20 minutes later and get into it with somebody and can just rip them to shreds and James' conclusion is this.

That just should not be. I mean, that just is inexcusable. That's just something that should never take place that with this same tongue, I praise God and turn around and then belittle my wife or my children, my husband, folks I know, people I work with.

Man, that just cannot be. That's just unthinkable in James' mind. And he tells us why it's unthinkable. Look at verse 11. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening?

Well, you know the answer to that. It's obviously no. It's a rhetorical question. No. It's just something that doesn't happen. We've gotten away from using water fountains during COVID, right?

[ 18 : 15 ] I look forward to when we can open those up again. But when you used to use a water fountain, you went up and you pushed that button and you bend over and take it. Have you ever gotten a sip of water?

Boy, that was good. I think I'll get another sip. Ooh, that's bad. Well, that's good. Well, that's bad. No. If it's good to begin with, it's going to continue to be good.

And if it's bad from the beginning, it doesn't get good. It's going to continue to be bad, right? And that's what James is saying. Verse 12. Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs?

We know the answer to that. The answer is no. I mean, fig trees produce figs and grapevines produce grapes. Olive trees produce olives.

Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water. Again, I'm emphasizing that when James talks about the tongue, he's not talking about the literal tongue.

[ 19 : 21 ] He's talking about those things that we say. Words are powerful conveyors of thought. When I was a kid, the middle school teachers in that day used to tell us all the time they would do it to help some child who'd been beat up on a little bit by somebody verbally.

They'd come up and put their arm around that child and they'd say something like this. Y'all have all heard it from my age. These youngsters probably hadn't heard it as much, but people my age used to hear this all the time. They'd put their arm around that person who had been assaulted verbally and they would try to encourage them and they would try to encourage them by saying this.

You just remember. Remember what I'm going to say? Sticks and stones will break your bones, but names will never hurt you. I think they quit doing that. You know why?

It's a lie. There's no truth in that. It may make that little boy or girl feel better in the moment, but it's just not true. Can I tell you, most injuries you suffer in life where you break an arm or you have to go to the ER and get sewed up or maybe you get in a fight as a kid and you get a black eye, it's going to heal in a couple days.

I mean, it ain't no big deal, right? We all suffer those kind of hurts. But I'm going to tell you something. There are hurts that we suffer as individuals when people who we have confidence in look at us and say things to us that are hurtful and spiteful and demeaning.

[ 20 : 45 ] And I'm going to tell you, I've talked to people for 50 years in counseling and some of those wounds are as fresh today as they were the day it happened. I could tell you right now, and I'm not exaggerating, I could tell you illustration after illustration after illustration of people that I've dealt with in counseling who have told me about things that happened 30, 40 years ago in their life.

And when they tell it, you would think if you didn't know better, this happened about two and a half, three hours ago. It's that fresh. They remember being told they were stupid.

They remember being smacked across the mouth. They remember being told they never amount to anything. They remember being told how worthless they were.

They remember being told how they never amount to anything. Those words are just indelibly etched in their mind. And somebody probably came along in most instances and said, hey, I'm sorry, I lost my cool.

I said that and I shouldn't have. I didn't mean that. You convince that little mind that they didn't mean it. You convince that wife who's hurt and crying, you really didn't mean that.

[ 21 : 55 ] I'm telling you, words are powerful, powerful tools. With words, we can unite and we can divide, can't we? I was in a business meeting years ago.

I was in Statesville, North Carolina when I pastored there in a pretty contentious business meeting. It wasn't anything super serious, but they're arguing, believe it or not, over a church bus. We're going to buy a church bus.

Those days, to tell you how long ago, the whole thing wasn't but \$28,000. They're going to buy this church bus. But the big argument was, do we buy it with a bathroom or without a bathroom? And half the people wanted a bathroom.

The old ones thought we ought to have a bathroom. The younger ones thought, no, that'll smell. We don't need a bathroom in that bus. And so they're arguing back and forth. Well, this man in the church who's pretty influential stands up and he says, I just want you to know, if you'll buy a bus with a bathroom in it, I'll give \$5,000 for that bus tonight.

That was a big incentive. They took the vote. He thought they would maybe come to his side with that. And they didn't. They lost by about three or four votes.

[ 23 : 01 ] So you can just tell there was an uneasiness. And we'd always had good spirit in business, but there was an uneasiness. And you know what he did? He united those people. That same man stood back up and said, well, you know what? We just voted, and we voted not to get that bus with a bathroom, even though I wanted it.

I want to be the first to get \$5,000 for a bus with no bathroom. And people began to laugh, and they came together, and there was unity. Can I tell you something? You've seen it, and I've seen it.

You've seen a place that was divided, and somebody say exactly the right thing, and what happens? There are words that unite, right? It brings us together. But sadly, I've also seen at times in business meetings, somebody stand up and say something, and it wasn't because they opposed me or because they opposed some idea the deacons were bringing.

It was because they had a divisive spirit. They just divided the room. And listen, it wasn't that they said what they said to make a point. It's that they said what they said. It was clear.

They wanted to create division. Have you ever seen anybody use words in that way? They're trying to divide. They try to divide a home. They try to divide a team.

[ 24 : 07 ] They try to divide a church. They're speaking divisively. Words can divide. Words are powerful. They're powerful. We need to be careful about how we use our words. They can heal.

They can wound. They can motivate. They can demoralize. They can anger. They can inspire. They can devastate, and they can encourage. I want to ask you how many of you have ever been devastated by somebody's words, but I'm going to tell you this.

My guess is everybody in the room. My guess is at some time, somebody in your life is devastated. You hopefully just momentarily, but you know what it is to be just knocked off your feet, taken back by what somebody says, and it hurts, but I hope you also know what it is to be encouraged by somebody's words.

Well, I can't tell you the times many of you in this room. In fact, when I talk about first pickings, I did someone this last week, when they say, well, what do you have to say about those folks? I say, I'll tell you this. They're the most encouraging people I've ever preached to.

I've never had people be as complimentary about poor preaching in my life as they are here, but you know how to encourage, and you know what it is to encourage people, right?

[ 25 : 15 ] It's a good feeling when somebody comes and they just encourage you. Words can encourage you. So let me ask you, have your words ever hurt anybody?

Are you guilty of doing that, hurting somebody with your words? Are you also guilty of helping somebody with your words, encouraging somebody? I bet you've done that to a waiter or a waitress before.

You can just tell their dad and you just lift them up by what you say. Boy, it's a good thing, you know. Good feeling for not only the one being encouraged, but the one who's doing the encouraging to encourage other folks.

Well, skip down with me now. Guys, if you can do that, look to James 1.19. And I want you to read this final verse with me, and then we're going to draw five quick conclusions.

I want you to look to James 1. Go back a couple of chapters. This is one of my favorite verses in the Scripture. My dearly loved brothers, understand this. Everyone must be, now just look up and listen to me at this point, because I want you to get this graphic in your mind.

[ 26 : 21 ] Everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

And this is how he drives the point home, because, the next verse, for the anger of man, are you ready for this? It never accomplishes the righteousness of God.

When I first started preaching, 25 years of age, full-time out of seminary, I went to my first church, Western Avenue in Statesville. And boy, I had a little bit of a temper. And I actually thought, you know, it's a good thing, because I'm not going to let anybody run over me.

I'm not going to let anybody abuse the church. And boy, if you get out of line or something, I'm going to be quick to tell you. I'm going to just, I'm going to tell you.

And I was reading the Scripture one day, and God convicted me through this verse I just read to you. Be quick to listen. Most of us would do well to listen way, way, way, way, way more than we do.

[ 27 : 35 ] And slow to speak. You know who my heroes are in life? The people typically who say the least. When I think of the people in life who I most want to be like, it's typically people who say the least.

And then he says, slow to anger. And this is why, because the anger of man, and he's either right or he's wrong in this, either God, when he inspired him, was right or he was wrong, it never accomplishes the righteousness of God.

If you've got a temper and you're proud of it because you think, I just speak my mind, I just tell the truth, I'm just candid, really, you need to think of yourself in a different way that you're just cruel and don't have a filter.

You understand? That you just speak too quickly. That you're arrogant. And we don't like to think of ourselves that way.

But I'm going to tell you, the anger of man never, ever, ever, ever once accomplishes the righteousness of God. You don't need that. You don't need that.

[ 28 : 39 ] So what can we learn from the passage we've looked at today? Well, we can make a choice and that choice should be to use my tongue the way God intended for me to use my tongue.

For me to honor God with my tongue. Now, I would guess that everybody in this room to this point would say, well, Pastor, I'm with you and I'm in agreement and I'd like to. So how do I do that?

I'm going to tell you five things just real quickly. You can write these down if you want to. But here's five ways you can do that. Five practical, real ways you can do it. One, choose not to injure others with your words.

Choose not to injure others with your words. Now, how am I going to go about doing that? First of all, when I'm angry, I'm going to speak with extreme caution.

I'm going to speak with extreme caution whenever I find myself getting angry. So here's what that involves. I've got to know when I'm getting angry and a lot of us, I'm fearful, don't. Anger just kind of sneaks up on us, right?

[ 29 : 44 ] You've got to become aware of what you're feeling. And when you feel yourself getting mad, the best thing you can do is shut your mouth. And just say, I'm going to be extremely careful. I'm going to be on red alert like the military when it comes to using my tongue, employing my tongue because this is a vile weapon I have at my disposal.

I'm going to be especially careful when I open my mouth whenever I'm angry because I don't want something to come out that will cause me harm or cause someone else harm. I choose not to injure others as I speak.

Additionally, if I'm going to do that, I've got to avoid being critical as often as I possibly can because watch this and this makes common sense. The more critical I am, the more I am apt to hurt somebody with my words.

Would you agree with that? The more often I am critical of others or some situation, the more apt I am to misspeak. So what I've got to learn to do is this.

I've got to quit being critical as much. I used to tell my son when he was a little boy, you know son, it is possible to have a thought and not say it. We live in a world today where folks don't get that.

[ 30 : 59 ] You understand? They think they have a license somehow if they think it. I just got to tell people. They want to know what I think. Can I tell you something? They don't want to know what you think. Most people don't give a nickel what you think.

Most people would rather you listen to what they think, right? And that's what gets us in trouble. We all have got these opinions but you've just got to learn to not commentate on everything that goes on in the world.

Have you ever seen folk who it doesn't matter what happens, where it happens, if it's at school, if it's on the playground, if it's in church, if it's in business, if it's at the courthouse, something happens? Well, let me just tell you what I think about that.

They've got to be a commentator for it. You know what I miss about the news when I was a kid? When I was a kid, you cut on the news for 30 minutes and you heard somebody say, and here's what happened in the world today, and they just mostly show you clips of what people were saying and they let you draw your own conclusion.

Well, now they show you about a 15-second clip and they got seven guys there to tell you what they just said. Now, spend the next 30 minutes telling you what they just told you, right?

[ 32 : 03 ] And they got all these different opinions. And how many of you really appreciate all their opinions, right? I want to tell you something. In real life, that's how folks feel about mine and your opinion.

I'm not saying it's about you, it's about me. They don't care what we think. So if you want to keep from hurting folks' feelings, don't feel like I've got to give everybody my opinion on what just happened.

No, you don't. Keep it to yourself. Here's the second thing. Choose to use your tongue to build others up. This is the one I really do love. Choose to use your tongue to build others up.

Make that commitment today. Say, God, from this day forward, I'm going to use my tongue not to pull people down, but to build people up. Tell you a story I heard about back in the 80s, I guess it was.

There's a guy named Johnny Lingo. He was a native from Pacific Island way out near Tahiti somewhere. And this guy was a good-looking guy, young guy, late 20s, eligible bachelor, most eligible bachelor on the island.

[ 33 : 09 ] All the young ladies in town had wondered, when is he ever going to get married? They had a different kind of custom in that place where he lived. When you decided to get married, instead of just going to your fiancée, you went to the town square and you announced to the whole town, hey, I've decided I'm going to take a bride and here's who my bride is.

They announced it. And the following week on the next Saturday, the whole town would gather and the father and the groom-to-be would barter over the price of the bride. They always dealt in cows.

Some women, if they weren't too attractive, were one-cow women. Some women, if they were kind of average, were two-cow women. If you were really a looker, you might be a three-cow woman.

Every blue moon, a four-cow woman would come about. And it was just phenomenal if you were a four-cow woman. So Johnny Lingo comes to town one day and everybody's wondering when he's ever going to get married.

He's good-looking. He's got lots of money and he announces to the town, I'm going to marry. Next Saturday, I'm going to marry. And everyone's, who's it going to be? Who's it going to be? And they thought, maybe this real good-looking gal or that good-looking gal.

[ 34 : 13 ] When he announced his choice, the whole town, you couldn't believe the silence that fell. He said, I intend to marry Mejia. And they thought, Mejia? Is he crazy?

Mejia? Mejia's hair was unkempt. She was never dressed appropriately. She was backward and shy and just removed from everything.

The kids had made fun of her all of her life. Now she's a young woman. And they just couldn't, why is he taking Mejia? Somebody said, it's because he's got all that money. He's tired. He's just too cheap to get a good wife.

So, the following Saturday, they meet there in the town square and the father of Mejia comes and says, I'll sell you Mejia because he knows he can't push it.

You know, she's not much of a looker. He says, two cows. And Johnny Lingo says, Johnny Lingo not give you two cows. Johnny Lingo give you not two cows. He says, well, okay, one cow.

[ 35 : 11 ] He says, no, Johnny Lingo not give you one cow. Guy says, look, you're not getting her for horns and hooves. So, he says, no, no, you don't understand. Johnny Lingo not give you two cows. Johnny Lingo not give you one cow.

Johnny Lingo give you ten cows from Mejia. Everybody was stunned. One person said, it's because he's got all that money. He doesn't want to show off how much money he's got.

Well, he pays the guy the ten cows. He takes Mejia by the hand and they leave to go on their honeymoon. They're going to be gone 30 days. As he's leaving, he gets to the edge of town. There's this little British mercantile and he goes inside and he asks this merchant, you have one of those pearl-covered, pearl-handled combs and brush sets with a mirror?

Guy says, no, but I can order you one. When will it be here? It'll be here in about three weeks. That's good. We're going on a four-week honeymoon. When we get back, you bring it out to my place. And so, the guy agrees.

Well, they're going 30-day honeymoon. He comes back. The British merchant gets the thing he's ordered and he's going to take it out to his little hut at the edge of the island. He gets out to the guy's hut.

[ 36 : 17 ] He's still about 150 yards away and he hears voices and they're loud voices. One voice in material is just saying over and over, you cheated me, you cheated me, you cheated me. And he gets closer, about 100 yards away.

He sees this figure come storming out of the hut and it looks like he is daddy. Well, he gets closer still. He's about 25, 50 yards away and this beautiful, not dead, gorgeous woman comes out and she's got something to get water with and she walks to the well.

Merchant walks on up on the porch and knocks at the door. Johnny Lingo comes to the door and he says, I see you have my brush and mirror set and he says yes and he pays him for it. He says, Johnny, I'm not trying to be nosy or anything.

He said, but was that Mejia's dad I heard arguing with you as I came up and he said, yeah. He said, did he say you cheated him? He said, yeah. What did you cheat him over?

He says, well, I didn't cheat him. He says, but he says, I cheated him. He says, he said, I gave too little for Mejia. Too little? You gave 10 cows. He said, I know, but he thinks I cheated.

[ 37 : 23 ] He said, oh, and one other thing said, who's that gorgeous woman that walked out of the house a minute ago to go draw water? He said, oh, that's Mejia.

Mejia? Well, what happened to her in the last 30 days? Johnny said, well, you know, Johnny, Lingo, pretty shrewd businessman. He said, I know all my life.

She's a real cat. She's a real fan. He said, but the kids at school, they made fun of her. She didn't wear nice clothes the way the other kids did. They belittled her.

Her dad belittled her. Her dad often drove her away from the house. She became backward, lived in the woods by herself much of her life. He said, but I always know, Mejia, she a real prize.

He said, well, how did she transform so much in 30 days? He said, oh, that's the easy part. He said, every day, I look at Mejia and say, Mejia, most of them girls in town, one, two, three cow women, you a 10 cow woman.

[ 38 : 27 ] I'm going to tell you something. People will become what you tell them they are. Do you know that? My little grand boy, I hold him in my arms every week.

And every week, I tell him how sweet he is, how smart he is, what a good boy he is. Because I'm convinced if I tell him that over and over and over, he's going to become that.

He's going to become that. I hope you'll choose to use your words to build others up. Thirdly, I hope you'll choose to speak only the truth.

Psalms 15, verse 4b, says this. It's one of my, again, favorite verses. The psalmist is talking about who can live on God's holy hill.

Who can live with God? Boy, you've got to get your game together to live with God, you'd think. This is what he says. One of the attributes of a man who will live with God. He sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not.

[ 39 : 34 ] That's the King James Version, but I like that. He sweareth to his own hurt and he changeth not. You know what that means? It means when he's faced with telling the truth and thereby being embarrassed by it or being hurt by it, he still just tells the truth.

He's not going to attempt to save face by telling a lie. And when we lie to cover up something we've done wrong, that's what we're doing. You know that? We're trying to save face. But you know what happens?

When that lie is discovered, we not only lose faith, but we also lose our sense of integrity. We've lost worse than just face. And the man or woman of God who uses her tongue as they should, they always speak the truth.

Can I ask you something? Is that how you speak? I don't know if I accomplished it or not, but for 25 years when I was at Western or Brushy Creek, I tried to always be somebody who spoke the truth.

Because I'm going to tell you, your name and your integrity means absolutely everything. You can't get that back once you've lost it. Do you understand that? I didn't ever want anybody to say, well, you know what?

[ 40 : 40 ] You better parse Ralph Carter's sentences. You ever seen people like that? They said something, but you've got to go out and you've got to interpret it. Now, what does that really mean? Here's what he said, but what did he really mean?

I hope you'll use your tongue to always speak only the truth. Fourthly, choose to speak wholesomely. Choose to speak wholesomely. Because the world seeks to be earthly doesn't mean that I've got to do the same.

I'm going to tell you, I'm disappointed at some of the preachers I hear preaching today because many think that they've got to be shock jocks. They've got to use the language of the world and earthy terms and I know we want to be colorful and we want to be graphic and paint pictures for people, but I want to tell you something, you don't ever have to be earthy.

I don't know about you, my favorite type of movie is a comedy, but I've just about quit watching them and the reason is because people today will settle for cheap laughs by just using a word of profanity or saying something vulgar or crude or off color.

And there is no place for that in the life of a believer. Choose to speak wholesomely and finally, choose to add authenticity to your worship by guarding how you use your tongue.

[ 42 : 00 ] Now here's what I mean by that. If I use my tongue to praise God, it nullifies my act of worship.

And my credibility and authenticity as a believer, if 15 minutes later, 20 minutes later, I'm heard talking in a fashion, I'm not talking about just crude speech, I'm talking about being hateful.

It nullifies the authenticity of my worship. If I'm able to do that with a waitress or with my wife or with my children or my grandchildren or somebody with whom I have a dispute, we're all going to get in a dispute.

You're going to have arguments, but I don't tell you something, you don't have to be somebody who uses abusive speech even when you disagree with somebody. When I'm fishing at times, I love to fish.

When I fish at times, if a fish breaks off my hook, I reach my tackle box and get another hook and I'll tie it on and I get it snug. I've drawn it tight. I look in my tackle box for a knife.

[ 43 : 01 ] If I can't find a knife, I look for a pair of fingernail clippers. When I can't find a pair of fingernail clippers, those of you who fish know what I'm about to say, right? Can I tell you something?

God didn't give me teeth to cut fishing line with. He didn't. And when I use my teeth for that purpose, I run the risk of hurting myself, hurting my teeth.

When I use my tongue in a way that God didn't intend for me to use it, I run the risk of hurting myself and hurting those around me. So I'll use my tongue.

Choose today to use my tongue for exactly, expressly what God gave me the tongue to do. And you know what that is? To bring Him glory and to pick up people around you, to point them to Jesus, to encourage them.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, today as we come to this time of decision, I pray God that we would decide how we're going to use our tongues, that we would stop saying, well, that's just me and that's how I talk and take responsibility for our actions and our words.

[ 44 : 10 ] Let us choose today to use our tongues the way you've intended for us to use them. It's our prayer in your name. For your sake we pray. Amen. Let's stand as we sing. Thank you.com for your message and tale.

What seems to choose and you sing as we have such a challenge is your motion because today it's our time to give you anlat for our sake of matter here and to you you sorry may but give you or have to the way you've to learn as you and to utiliz