



**SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE**

**SPEAKER: JACOB WIRKA**

**Monday, 03/07/2022**

**Scripture: James 3:3-4**

**TITLE: Don't Shoot from the Lip**

The average person speaks around 7,000 words a day, and some of us speak a lot more than that! That's a lot of words! That's a lot of opportunities. Opportunities to build people up and opportunities to tear people down. The old saying goes, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." But if we're being honest, I think we all know that's not true; some of the deepest pains we carry come from careless and evil words spoken to us. Words are a powerful thing and should never be used carelessly.

The Bible would seem to agree with the importance of the things we say. In James chapter 3, James has just gotten done talking about the idea that faith without works is dead; that is to say, we are meant to live out our faith in Jesus, and it should transform the way we live. Continuing this theme, in chapter 3, James teaches how every aspect of our lives should demonstrate our faith in the gospel. Including the words we speak. In James chapter 3, verses 3:3-4 (ESV) it says this:

*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 are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a tiny rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.*

James' point is clear; these are both great examples of how big and powerful things can be directed by very small forces. In the same way, our tongues are a very small part of our bodies physically yet very powerful.

I can relate to some of these examples in my way. When I was young, I loved riding and working with horses. I can still remember being impressed by how big and powerful these horses were and how easily I could lead them around and direct them with something as small as a bit and some reins. I remember how intimidated I was when I took the horse's reins for the first time; I remember the responsibility I felt as I was in control of such a powerful animal. I can also remember losing control more than once and how terrifying that was! An out-of-control horse can do a lot of damage, and when you lose the reins as a rider, you're just along for the ride, and you have no idea where that horse is going to take you!

If we follow the illustration of James, our tongue is like the horse's reins; they determine where we go. In many ways, our tongues reflect the state of our hearts. If a person's words are out of control, oftentimes so is the person's heart. Not only can our bodies be easily guided by words, but so too can the body of the church. So we must be careful with the words we speak and the words we allow to guide us.

In the same way, with the illustration of the ship, a powerful boat is dependent on a small rudder to determine where it goes. Ultimately, in both of these illustrations, we must ask the question of who or what is in control? Who holds the reins to our hearts, then what desires will steer the ship of our soul? If we try to take control of ourselves and let our emotions, our stress, and our sinful desires guide our words, we will lose control of our words. Words have the power to hurt other people and ourselves.

But if we give control to Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to continue to work on our hearts and guide our way, we will find that our words reflect the heart that Jesus has changed. We can use powerful words to teach, encourage, and build people up rather than hurt and tear down. May Jesus grant us the humility to allow the Holy Spirit to be the force that guides our tongues, that we might use our words for his glory!