Stretch Your Talk

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[0:00] How many of you like to build things? That's it. We don't got any more builders in here than that?

! Maybe you're the creative type. Give you a puzzle, you'll put it together by yourself and take joy from it.
You give me a puzzle, it'll stress me out, man. Especially those thousand piece things. Find a corner piece. How?
It's got a little bit of an eye in it. I go see different people from time to time and sometimes when I'm visiting people, somebody I'm thinking of in particular up in an assisted living home in Wichita Falls and she's got a group of friends that work on puzzles together.
And they completed one and it was so beautiful, they asked the manager of the place, can we put this on the wall? And she said, give me a minute. And she went and bought this beautiful wood frame and they were remodeling the entire facility and they said, this is going to go in a place of prominence on the wall.
[1:15] So you had a bunch of creative types, a bunch of builders coming together, working on this puzzle and now it is displayed for all to see. And I would have had no part in that. I just would have been cheering them on.

Good job, you people. But a lot of people are project oriented. They love to break down the details and they love to create something positive, something useful from their hard work.
These are the kind of people that Ikea furniture was made for, designed for. Some of you, if you've never experienced Ikea furniture, you may not get that joke unless you've just heard about it.
But has anybody ever tried to put something together that you bought at Ikea? Now we don't have one up here, but down in the Metroplex, yeah, more people than I thought. Okay, good. I was hoping some of you might relate.
This is a good way. Now, first of all, this is what their instructions look like. It's this little man and then little pictures. And at the end of the day, you're just going to end up calling in the customer service line.
[2:15] That's just how it works. God bless you if that's your idea of a good time. You look at a pile of parts and say, challenge accepted. Now, let's get to the rest of you.

How many of you like to bulldoze things? There you go. Demo Day. Anybody ever watch the, was it Fixer Upper, Chip and Joanna Gaines, Waco's favorite couple?
And what was Chip's, if you did watch that show, we're getting a little bit niche here in your TV watching habits. It came on Home and Garden Television for a while. And now I think it's on the Magnolia Network if you have that. But Chip Gaines' favorite thing was what?
Demo Day. There you go. We have a lot of Fixer Upper fans in the room. Yes, that was his favorite thing because he got to go in with a sledgehammer and just bust stuff up. It was great.
And of course, they were going to flip that house and make it all nice and try to sell it for a profit. But some of us just like to go in and hit things. So much so that these came about.
[3:22] Anybody know what this is? It's a rage room. I don't think we have one in this area. Maybe we should. Maybe you give people an outlet to go for their anger.

I don't know. I don't know if that's a healthy way to express your anger or not. But that's kind of the whole concept is you pay somebody money to give you some weapons and go into a room and just break a bunch of stuff.
I think you got to wear protective gear and all that. But probably sign your life away on release forms. But listen, they literally just say, here, we exist to help you break things down, tear things apart.

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And people love it. So let's be honest. It might sound a little fun sometimes. Where are we going with building things and bulldozing things?
Well, the truth is, in the book of James, James teaches us that our tongue can either build things up or tear things down.
[4:33] So would you go with me to that passage, James chapter 3. James chapter 3. We're continuing on in this series that we started last Sunday called Summer Stretch.

Last Sunday, what did we talk about? Do you remember? Stretch your time. There you go. Be confident. Say it with your chest. Stretch your time.
And we kind of came down to the question, are you focusing on what is good instead of what's best? Has your idea of good taken the place of God's idea of best in your life?
Somebody came to me right before the service and said, hey, you know, we're not always spending, we're not spending our time, we're investing it. And I said, hey, somebody was paying attention, man.
That's awesome. That is a concept we learned last week. It's not just spending time, it's investing it. So what are you investing it in? Are you investing your time in the things of the kingdom of God?
[5:34] So let's go to James chapter 3 now. Today, we're not going to talk about stretching your time. Today, we're going to talk about stretching your talk.

Stretching your talk. Let's look at what James says in the third chapter of this letter. He doesn't pull any punches. All right? Verse 1.
Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. By the way, teachers, preachers in the room, don't forget that.
If you take it upon yourself to open God's word and teach from it, teach the eternal truths that apply to every one of us, we bring on a stricter judgment for ourselves.
We are allowing God to use us as his mouthpiece on this earth, as his vessel on this earth. And so it is a high and holy calling and privilege, and we don't take it lightly.
[6:35] Verse 2. 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.

You know what perfect there in that context means? Complete. Whole. So now verse 3. When we put bits into the mouths of horses, anybody know what they're talking about, putting a bit in a horse's mouth?
More hands can go up. Y'all can engage. This is Henrietta, Texas, y'all. It's Clay County. You know what a bit in a horse's mouth is, right? All right.
I was like, they're all going to track with this one. Or you take ships as an example. Although they're 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. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.
[7:40] 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 it sets itself on fire by hell.

Verse 7. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind.
Anybody got a dog or a cat? This really has nothing to do with the sermon except this part of the passage right here. How many dog people are in the room?
Can you wave at me? How many cat people are in the room? How many are both? Okay. God bless you dog people. All right.
That's all right. Heaven's open for all. I don't understand how sometimes you cat people, but that's all right. Just kidding. But you understand the point?
[8:42] We can tame all kinds of animals. You look at a lion and then you look at your tabby cat in your house and say, how are those two related, but somehow they come from the whole same family. And a wolf and your little poodle, right?

I mean, how does that work? But sometimes we have taken all these species and figured out how to tame them. But no human being, verse 8, can tame the tongue.
We can take a wild animal and tame it, but we can't control this thing. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

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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 comes praise and cursing.
My brothers and sisters, this should not be. What's he saying? Again, your tongue is either a tool or a weapon.
[9:43] It can be a tool to build up, or it can be a weapon to tear down, depending on how you use it. So let's get into it.

Number one, if you're keeping notes in your bulletin, you want to fill in those blanks. Number one, your words carry power. Your words carry power. James does not pull punches in chapter 3 here. The tongue is small, but it steers everything like a horse's bit. Here we go. See? Now you know what we're talking about, right? Oh yeah, that thing. How do you control a mighty animal like a horse?
We don't need to look far to remember just how strong and sometimes deadly horses can be. So many families in this room or in our community have been touched by accidents, sometimes fatal, with horses.
So how do we control these great beasts? With a tiny little piece of metal. How does that work? Something so small controlling something so mighty.
[10:51] And then a ship's rudder is the other example that James gives. You think of a mighty ship. A huge cargo ship. And the direction it goes is controlled by that little piece of metal right there.

Isn't that crazy? Yeah, it's got big engines. It's got boiler rooms. It's got all this technology. But at the end of the day, all that is just controlling one little piece of metal that tells it where to go.
What an interesting illustration, an effective illustration that James gives us about what our mouth, what our tongue, let's just call it our talk.
What our talk can do. It can control us. It can control our lives. It can set the course of either building up or tearing down.
Verse 8, no human being can tame the tongue. It's a restless evil full of deadly poison. Your words carry power. They can be used as positive power or they can be used as negative power.
[12:02] He says they can start fires. Destructive fires. So it can be used for a positive purpose. And certainly horses with bits in their mouths can be used for positive purposes.

Certainly ship's rudders can be used for positive purposes. But the tongue is also likened to a fire which exists to destroy. So we've all felt the damage that words can do.
From sarcastic comments. From careless comments. From venting. Just let me go off for a minute here. And it feels good.
But we can't take back what is done from those thoughtless, sarcastic, careless, venting comments. That's why it matters.
That's why God included it in our Bible. That's why James mentions it here. And throughout the scriptures we have warnings about our talk.
[13:08] So. So. Not just in person. But in today's world. We've also got to think about our talk online.

Because often. We would never say face to face. What we're willing to type on a computer screen. Or on a phone screen. Look.
If it does not. We're jumping ahead. But if it does not build up. Then what business. Does a child of God have.
In saying it. And that's the reality of it. Say yes. But somebody's got to say it. That's your flesh talking. That is your sense.
Of saying. I need justice for a perceived wrong. Number one. The wrong might not be. As perceived. As in reality. As you perceive it to be.
[14:06] You think a wrong has been done. Number one. You've been wrong before. I've been wrong before. What we think needs to happen. May actually not need to happen.

Number two. We may not need to be the one to say it. Number three. The way in which we say it. Is very likely in those moments. Not how Christ would say it. So often times.
We must just stop. Pray. And obey the proverbs. That say. Wisdom is often found in silence. So. Last Sunday.
We talked about there's a time for everything. There's a time to keep quiet. And there's a time to speak up. The time to speak up. Is when you are guided by the Holy Spirit. When you know you're

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not reacting in the flesh.
But you're being moved by God's Spirit. And you're being used to build up. Not tear down. That's when it's time to speak up.
[15:04] So. Your words carry power. We must understand this. Number two. God wants your words to build. Very simple points.

But if we can wrap our heads around these. It will transform. Our relationships. Our lives. The things we care about the most. It'll transform it. If we remember that our words have power.
And God wants to use that power. To build up. Not to tear down. Your words can build your church. Or they can tear it down. Build your kids. Or tear them down.
Build your wife. Your husband. Co-workers. Employees. Those who see. Your posts online.
Or those who are affected. By your posts online. Secret meetings. Careless comments. It'll either build it up. Or tear it down.
[16:01] God wants to use. Your talk. To build up. Not to tear down. So. Let's look at what he has to say about it. Ephesians. Gives us a great passage on this.

Ephesians chapter 4. Let no corrupting talk. Come out of your mouths. But only. Such as is good for. What does that say? Building up. Let's do it again.
Only such as is good for. Building up. As fits the occasion. That it may give grace. To those who hear. I love. That it put that phrase in there.
As fits the occasion. Sometimes. It might be the right thing to say. But the wrong. Time to say it. And that's what we talked about a little bit last Sunday.
There's a time for everything. There's a season for everything. But it might not be when we want it to be. Right? How many of you asked God for something. And he didn't give it to you when you wanted it.
[16:59] He gave it to you later. I can raise both hands on that. That's how it's been for me many times. Right? Because God knows when it's best. So we have to follow his prompting.

His leading in our talk. Not our own flesh. Not what we want. Not what we think. In the moment. Is right. Does it really fit the occasion right now?
So. Only such talk as is good for building up. How about Colossians? Let your conversation always be full of grace. Seasoned with salt.
So that you may know how to answer everyone. Going back to the spring. And I think even maybe back late winter. We talked about salt. And we talked about Roman soldiers.
Who used to get paid in salt. It was called white gold. And it had this high value as a commodity. And so salt would carry great value and importance.
[17:59] As Jesus is using through Paul. The writer to the church in Colossae. He's using this as an illustration. Let your speech be seasoned with salt.

Let it bring great value. What does salt do? It can heal. It can preserve. It can flavor. Enhance. Improve. Salt can do all these things. So if your speech is not doing those things. Then we're not following the Bible's instructions. Our conversation.
Our whole manner of life. But certainly including our talk. Should be seasoned with salt. So it can heal. So it can preserve. So it can improve.
And enhance. Not tear down. Then. You'll know how to answer everyone. You ever felt in the moment.
[18:55] That you just don't know what to say. Maybe don't say anything. Maybe that's a time. Or a season. To be quiet. Until God gives you.

Something to say. Seasoned with salt. So. Well. I'm not teaching anything.
That probably most of you have not heard before. But my question to you is. How well are we following this instruction? How well.
Is our talk. Building up. And not tearing down. You might say. In an honest response. It depends on the day.
It depends on the moment. Depends on the topic. Depends on what we're talking about. Right? There are certain triggers. That just set me off.
[19:53] Man. You start talking about this with me. I'm going to get upset. Right? The truth is. We probably fail at this more often.

Than we would like to admit. If there was instant replay. In your day. How many times. Would it come out. That your speech.

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Your talk. Your words. Did more to tear down. Than to build up. I can raise my hand. And say far more often. Than I would like to admit. Instant replay.
Is a valuable thing sometimes. They use it in sports. How many of you watch football? You got any football fans? We're in Texas. Come on. I know you watch. At least high school football. Instant replay.
You've got the guy. The official there. The referee. And he's. Somebody throws a flag. Or they make a call on the field. And then somebody challenges it. And said. Wait a minute. I don't think that's how it went down.
[20:54] I want you to go take another look at that. So the referee goes. And he watches the video again. And he's communicating. With the office. Up at the league office. The NFL league offices. And they're watching it. And they're breaking it down.

They're saying. Yep. I think you made the right call. Or they're saying. Nope. He was in bounds. Or he didn't get the first down. Or whatever the call in the field was. They have to then overturn it.
The problem is. You cannot overturn. You cannot overturn. You cannot overturn. What is said. With your mouth. You can say the words.
Oh I didn't mean that. Or I take that back. But you can't take it back. And whether or not. You meant it.
In the moment. You said it. And the damage. Has been done. So it's a serious. A grave thing. To be very careful.
[21:50] With what we say. I've had to go to people in this church. And say listen. I spoke harshly to you. I spoke in an unkind way to you.

Please forgive me. I can't go back. And take it back. The instant replay showed. I was wrong. But I can't overturn.
The call on the field. I can't just go make it right again. But I can humble myself. And ask for their forgiveness. And say God. Help me. Control my tongue.
Better. By your spirit. Because I'm not strong enough. So. Is our conversation. Always. Full of grace.
Seasoned with salt. Or sometimes. Would an instant replay reveal. No. We've been tearing down. Not building up. Finally.
[22:48] Philippians chapter 4. And verse 8. Finally my brothers. Whatever is true. Whatever is noble. Whatever is right. Whatever is pure. Whatever is lovely.

Whatever is admirable. If there is anything excellent. Or praiseworthy. Think about these things. Why is it so important.
To think about these things. Because what comes out of your mouth. What's in your heart. What's in your mind.
What you've been thinking about. What you've been dwelling on. Eventually that will come out. Whether it's in public. Or in private. It will come out.
So this is our litmus test. This is what we look at. And say. What is coming out of my mouth. Well. What is coming out of my mouth. Is what is in my heart.
[23:45] The Bible even says. What out of the abundance. Of the heart. The mouth speaks. So. Verse 9. Whatever you have learned. Or received.

Or heard. From me. Or seen in me. Do it. Put it into practice. And the God of peace. Will be with you. So that's the challenge. The challenge is.
What you've heard. That list. Whatever's true. Noble. Right. Pure. Lovely. Admirable. Do that. Think on those things. Consider those things.
Go back to them. Every day. Every morning. Say. God. Keep me focused on you. Your goodness. That song I heard in church. That time I had with you in the scriptures this morning.
Let me think on those things. So what comes out of my mouth in the moment. Comes from you. Not from my flesh. Finally.
[24:46] I want to equip you with some practical steps. The three gate rule. There was a famous radio host. Who said this. Before you speak. Ask yourself.

If what you're going to say. Is true. Is kind. Necessary. Helpful. If the answer is no. Maybe what you're about to say. Should be left.
Unsaid. Now he didn't come up with that concept. Alone. It's been attributed to many people. This three gate rule. But it actually is traced back to a British poet.

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Named Marianne Pittsgird. And he said. She said. Is it true. Is it kind. Is it necessary. These are three gates.
That we should filter our words through. Before we say them. And all that happens in a split second. In the moment. Right before you respond. Is this true.
[25:39] What I'm about to say. Is it kind. And is it necessary. Right. So let's look at that. Call it the three gate rule. Is it true.

Is it kind. Is it necessary. Number one. Is it true. Don't pass along what you haven't verified. Y'all that right there. Would weed out so much. Of what is said online.
What is repeated as gossip. If you don't have this verified. Don't spread it. Look. I've been guilty of that. Just as much as any of you have. You hear a rumor.
And it's a juicy rumor. And man. We all love to be the one. With the juicy gossip. Right. The bit of information. Makes us feel like we matter. Like people are going to want to hear.
What we have to say. Don't pass it along. If it's not verified. Stop gossip. In its tracks. With some questions like these.
[26:36] Have you talked to this person. Directly yet. About this. You know more than likely. We don't know the whole story. I prefer not to talk about this. Without them here.

There are ways. That you. Can not only not engage. In unverified gossip. But also not. Participate in. Or be a party to.
This kind of thing. These short phrases. Can reroute an entire. Conversation. Can stop it in its tracks. And possibly. You're not going after that person.
But possibly. God could use. Those kinds of responses. To convict the other person. You know. That is the right response to this. Maybe I shouldn't be out here. Spreading this.
Is it true? Number two. Is it kind? We're not talking about. Fake niceness. We're talking about real grace. Is it kind?
[27:34] Kind. Jesus always showed kindness. Even to those who hurt him. He responded with grace.

Replace criticism. With encouragement. Building up. They may not be doing everything perfectly. But you can say.
You know what? I appreciate you. You're an image bearer of God. I respect you. And I appreciate. The good I see. That was thoughtful.
You're growing. And I see it. Thank you for showing up. Sometimes that's all it takes. You know. I can't really find anything else nice to say.
But you know what? Thanks for showing up. Sometimes. Just finding something kind to say. Can go so much further. Not only for that person.
[28:30] But for our spirits. For our hearts. Why? Because we're being like Jesus. Because in that moment. We're choosing kindness and grace. Instead of in what our minds.

Is justified anger. Condemnation. And criticism. Small words. Can have a big impact. Number three. Is it necessary? Just because it may be true.
Doesn't mean. It always must be said. And especially at that moment. Is it God or you. Who wants you to step in? That's a hard question.
Is it truly. God or you. Who wants you to step in. In that moment. Number three. Are you the best one to say it? Or would it be better said.
Or maybe better received. By someone else. Could someone go with you? Or could you go to someone else. And say you know. I see this. I don't want to approach this person.
[29:28] In the wrong spirit. Is there any way you could go with me? Or is there any way. Maybe you're closer to them. Could you. Talk to them. For me. Is it true.

Is it kind. Is it necessary. We come back to this. Every word we speak. Is either building up.
Or bulldozing. It's either helping. Or hurting. Building up. Or tearing down. You don't need a hammer. To wreck something.
Just words. Just idle talk. Careless talk. Unkind talk. Selfish talk. Can do as much damage.
As a sledgehammer. And a rage room. But Jesus wants to redeem that. He wants to use. Your words. To build up. He wants your mouth.
[30:25] To become. A place. Of grace. Let me say that again. God wants your mouth. To become. A place. Of grace. He wants you to be. The kind of person.

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Who builds others up. In a world. Where everybody's. Tearing everybody else down. On an internet. Where everybody's. Tearing everybody else down. On social media.
Where everybody's. Tearing everybody else down. In private conversations. Where it's so common. To tear others down. He wants you. To be the one. To build up.
So let me ask you. One last time. Are you a builder. Or a bulldozer. Would you bow your heads. And pray with me. God. I pray right now. That you would convict us. Every day. There's not one. Man. Woman. Or child. In this room. Who doesn't struggle. With what they say. We all sin. With our lips. Every day. We sin. With our mouths. Every day. We sin.
[31:19] With our talk. Every day. God. Forgive us. Teach us. Mold us. Shape us. To be more careful.

With our words. Not just in public. But in private too. There's somebody here. Who doesn't know you.
God. Then. Asking for your forgiveness. Doesn't do much good. They've got to be forgiven. Once and for all. For all their sins. And if there's somebody in the room. Who has not yet humbled yourself.
Before God. And said. God forgive me. For I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus did. Come to this earth. Was born. Did many miracles.
Died on the cross. Rose from the dead. And for the first time today. I want to place my faith in him. To forgive my sin. So I can have his Holy Spirit. So he can help me. In all these ways in my life.
[32:16] I need to become a child of God. Is there anybody like that in the room? Slip your hand up. I'd love to talk with you. If that's you. Assuming the vast majority of you. In this room.

Are children of God. Like me. I'm going to challenge you this. Right now. Either out loud. Or in your head.
Would you be willing. To pray this prayer with me. I think every one of us. Could use this. Lord. Tame my talk. Use my words. To build. Not break.
Make my mouth. A place of grace. In Jesus name. Amen. Let's try that together. If we could. I'm going to say it again. If you'd like to repeat it out loud.
Or if you'd just like to say it in your heart. Or if you just want to pray along with us. I'm going to invite you to do that right now. God. God. Hear your people. As we pray this to you. Lord.
[33:12] Tame my talk. Use my words. To build. Not break. Make my mouth. A place of grace.

In Jesus name. Amen. God. Let that be true. Of our church. Let that be true. In our homes. In our marriages. In school.
As our young people. Start up classes. Our teachers. And staff. Are jumping into the deep end. Let their talk. As people of God.
Be so different. So distinguishable. So easy to see the difference. In those who are Jesus followers. And those who are not. By our grace.
By our love. By the way. We speak. They'll know. We follow you. It's in Jesus name. We ask all this. Amen. Jared's going to lead us.
[34:13] Very briefly. In a verse of a song. You can keep your seats. You can come forward. You can come talk to me. Down front. If you've got something. On your heart. But let's. Leave just the last couple.

Of minutes here. To do some business with God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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