

THE POWER OF WORDS

A Study in Proverbs

Goal of Proverbs is to make us wise, especially youth (“my son” 22t; “son” 58t). But Solomon’s sons were disastrous. Jesus is the son that Solomon never had. The young Jesus grew in wisdom (Lk 2:40-52). In Proverbs, to be wise (46 times) or show *wisdom* (42x) contrasts to one who is *simple* (naïve, without direction), and more sharply to the *fool* who know what is right yet chooses to do wrong.

WISE BELIEVERS GUARD THEIR SPEECH.

I. WORDS CAN DESTROY.

A. Do Not Talk Too Much.

1. Are you a talker? Compared to others do you talk/text a lot? Judge yourself 1-10.
Not much 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Quite a lot
2. Cut the chatter. Pr 10:19.
3. Don’t respond too quickly. Pr 18:13; 29:20. To respond wisely, we must listen well.

B. Do Not Speak Carelessly.

1. What do you like to talk about?

2. Beware of indiscrete speech: Foolish talk means senseless chatter, immature joking, conversation without discernment, speaking without thinking. Pr 15:2,14. Easy in, easy out.
3. Do not boast. Pr 27:2.

C. Shun Destructive Speech.

1. Family fights
2. Evade critical, slanderous speech: We assume that to be smart is to be critical. Slanderous speech includes gossip (20:19; 26:20-22). In texting, tweets, blogs, all social media.
3. Avoid deception and lies. Pr 19:5 What are ways we subtly mislead or lie to others?
4. Absolutely stop crass, dirty, or blasphemous language.
Verbal junk food in often leads to verbal junk out.
5. Stay away from words (and images) that compel to evil.
 - The adulteress, the person (she or he) inviting you to have sex. Pr 5:3-4..
 - Those who urge you to join them in stealing, violence, illicit money. 1:10-15
 - Don’t get sucked into what others say is cool.

II. WORDS CAN BUILD UP.

A. How Can I Be Wise in My Communication?

1. Guard your lips. Pr 10:19, “He who holds his tongue is wise.” Cf. 13:3; 17:27-28.
How many times have we regretted saying something?
2. Consider how to respond. 15:28
 - Truthful: 15:7; 16:13; 24:26 “An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.”
 - Timely and appropriate: 15:23, “A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word.”
 - Persuasive: 16:23-24, “A wise person’s heart guides their mouth, and their lips promote instruction. Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

B. What Are the Fruits of Wise Speech?

The virtues and rewards of careful use of the tongue:

12:6 “The speech of the upright **rescues them**”

12:18 “the tongue of the wise **brings healing**”

15:2 “The tongue of the wise **adorns knowledge**”

10:21 “The lips of the righteous **nourish many**”

12:14 “From the fruit of their lips **people are filled with good things**”

10:11 “The mouth of the righteous is a **fountain of life**”

15:4 “The soothing tongue is a **tree of life**”

12:19 “Truthful lips endure **forever**”

CONCLUSION: PERSONAL PROJECT

1. Describe two habits of speech that you want to change, in obedience to the LORD. Pr 28:13

2. Memorize 1-2 verses that address the will of God for your words and all communications.
3. Establish a time frame in which you will commit yourself *daily* to overcome that which dishonors God in your speech. Three weeks breaks old habits. Six weeks builds new ones.
4. Ask someone near you to help you in this commitment and to remind you when you fail.
5. Experience in new ways the power of words for good, well-being, for building up others.

REMEMBER: The consequences of our speech are serious. Jesus declared, “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:35-37).