

Words February 5, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

What's a saying that was repeated to you often in your formative years – maybe by a parent, grandparent, coach, teacher, TV character?

Is there *wisdom* in that saying, something you've carried with you into adult life?

Life overflows with choices, demanding decisions so quickly we hardly consider which is the best course. When we know God's wisdom, though, we have a foundational framework to guide our decision making, helping us learn to live in God's world in God's ways. We will begin exploring God's wisdom in the Proverbs, focusing this week on how we choose to use our words and speech. Using poetic imagery about the lips, the tongue, the mouth and our words, the book of Proverbs relates over 150 proverbs about our speech. In Matthew 12:34, Jesus tells us that "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In other words, the things we say reveal what is in our hearts. As you begin, consider:

What wisdom does our culture offer us about our speech?

(If you need some help brain storming, you could start with "Sticks and stones...")

READ PROVERBS 12:5-6,13-19,22-23; 18:6-8,20-21; 25:11-15

- Take turns paraphrasing each proverb, or summarizing it's meaning
- Give a quick example of what this wisdom looks like in modern life

As you read through them all, brainstorm a few unifying themes or main themes you hear.

- How is this wisdom in general similar to or different from the wisdom you hear about our words and speech from culture?

CHOOSE TWO FAVORITE PROVERBS

From the selection above, which two stuck out or were the most interesting?

Read your selected proverbs in at least two other translations, then consider the following questions around each of those two Proverbs:

- What is the proverb highlighting as *good* (or, perhaps, as bad!) in God's eyes?
 - Is this easy or difficult to agree with? Why?
- Can you think of examples of this proverb in action from the Bible? What about in popular media? (Anti-examples are great too!)
- What contexts and scenarios in your own life need this wisdom?
 - Describe what it would look like to live by this wisdom in the situation where it will be most difficult.

A main theme throughout Proverbs is "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, etc) and conversely, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare" (Proverbs 29:25)

How could having your attention on human perception and outcomes - whether you're trying to please people, control people, pacify people, etc – lead you to *not* live in this wisdom?

- How does considering God as the One who defines right and wrong help you *to* live by this wisdom?

DAILY TIME

Proverbs 6
Proverbs 7
Proverbs 8
Proverbs 9
Proverbs 10
Proverbs 10
Psalm 19

As you read each day, consider:

What do these proverbs show me about God and His character?

Where do they highlight my need to confess and receive God's forgiveness?

Where can I ask for help to live out the wisdom I see that I need?

Blood Drive at Fulton Heights

February 26

Encounterchurch.org/events

NOTES AND QUOTES

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7

What does "fear of the Lord" mean?

Here are some helpful explanations:

- Being rightly oriented to God as our Creator, King and Savior (Pennington)
- humble openness to God's authority and desire for His wisdom; To live under His rule, rather than to rebel against His authority in our lives (Nancy)
- Right fear means reverence and awe; seeing God for who He is and giving Him the honor He is due (Wilkin)
- a respect that results in obedient response to the Word (Hernandez)
- repeatedly saying "yes" to the Lord, accompanied by a trust that He knows and does what's best for us (Hernandez)
- "The Fear of the Lord produces in us a longing for relationship with Christ as we wait in expectation and readiness for His coming." (Guthrie)

Memory Verse

"The tongue has the power of life and death..." Proverbs 18:21a

The Bible has two common phrases for how we make choices. We can choose what is "right in our own eyes" - this is a characteristic description of sin - or we can live by the fear of the Lord and do what is right in His sight - a characteristic description of obedience.

FROM THE MESSAGE

Working from Proverbs 18:21, Dirk discussed the weight and power of our words, and the need to be wise in choosing and using them.

Considering that our words have weight and power, whether we intend them to or not, where or when are you likely to let your words pile up (to speak without thinking, to run your mouth)?

- How can we practically become more aware of the things we're saying and their impact on those around us?

Proverbs 14:23 talks about how work brings a profit, but talk alone leads to poverty.

- Where in your life do you need to put action behind the words you say?

EXTRA: Read James 3:1-12

How does this passage expand and compliment the themes about words you identified in Proverbs?

- Does it add anything to your understanding of how God calls us to use our words to honor Him?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

As you pray for one another, ask God for wisdom; use James 1:5 to guide your prayer.

PRAYER AND CARE

How can you care for one another? How can you pray for one another?

Proverbs 12

5 The thoughts of the righteous are just;

the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood,

but the mouth of the upright delivers them.

*13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips,
but the righteous escapes from trouble.*

*14 From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good,
and the work of a man's hand comes back to him.*

*15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
but a wise man listens to advice.*

*16 The vexation of a fool is known at once,
but the prudent ignores an insult.*

*17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence,
but a false witness utters deceit.*

*18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

*19 Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

*22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,
but those who act faithfully are his delight.*

*23 A prudent man conceals knowledge,
but the heart of fools proclaims folly.*

Proverbs 18

*6 A fool's lips walk into a fight,
and his mouth invites a beating.*

The fear of the Lord
is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One
is insight. Proverbs 9:10

The Hebrew term "knowing" is not the same as our English term which means something more like "objective possession of facts." The Hebrew word includes the idea of *experience*, the process of learning, so as to see in a certain way. "Knowledge in the Bible is practical and living, obtained by experience and resulting in a change of who we are." (Pennington, p 43) This kind of *knowing* leads to an intimacy and true worship through listening to God's instructions and obeying His revelation.

7 A fool's mouth is his ruin,

and his lips are a snare to his soul.

*8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.*

*20 From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied;
he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.*

*21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.*

Proverbs 25

*11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.*

*12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise reproof to a listening ear.*

*13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
he refreshes the soul of his masters.*

*14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.*

*15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue will break a bone.*