

I WANT TO KNOW MY BIBLE

A Common Kingdom Problem

Scripture: Proverbs

Introduction: Did you notice the most common subject matter addressed in the book of Proverbs?

Of the 915 verses in Proverbs, 222 of them (almost ¼) deal with wisdom concerning the use of our tongues. Running a close numerical second are the verses speaking of God's principles concerning the use of money. It is interesting to note that Jesus' emphasis in His teachings concerning morality follows that same priority: speech, economics, everything else.

What we say, and don't say, is an important part of our success in living. And honestly, the misuse of our tongues is often a big problem in our living in the Kingdom of God.

More churches are destroyed or rendered ineffective by misspoken words than any other single cause. Sometimes when riding through the country I will see a church sign that says "Second Harmony Baptist Church," and I wonder what somebody said!

God's textbook of wisdom in Proverbs says,

I. WORDS ARE POWERFUL.

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.

A. Words are powerful because they can pierce the heart.

1. The piercing may be for evil.

Proverbs 12:18a There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword,

Psalm 64:2-5 ² Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, ³ Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows—bitter words, ⁴ That they may shoot in secret at the blameless; Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear. ⁵ They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter; They talk of laying snares secretly; They say, "Who will see them?"

Evildoers sharpen their tongues like swords and shoot their words like arrows. Notice that this is done in hiding, and they think secretly.

Even words lightly or quietly spoken sink deep in the mind and heart of the recipients.

Proverbs 18:8 The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body.

Words need not have an evil intent in order to produce deep harm.

Proverbs 29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

Fortunately, the power of words is not one-sided.

2. Words can also pierce the heart for good.

Proverbs 12:18b But the tongue of the wise *promotes* health.

Proverbs 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, ...

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words *are like* a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.

B. Words are powerful because they travel.

1. They can travel spreading evil.

Proverbs 16:27-28 ²⁷ An ungodly man digs up evil, And *it is* on his lips like a burning fire. ²⁸ A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

What is the speech of a worthless man like? A scorching fire!
What happens to the strife of a perverse person? It spreads!
Evil talk can even separate close friends.

Proverbs 6:12-14 ¹² A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth; ¹³ He winks with his eyes, He shuffles his feet, He points with his fingers; ¹⁴ Perversity *is* in his heart, He devises evil continually, He sows discord.

Who is here described? The worthless or wicked person with a perverted heart.

What is his speech like? Devises evil

What does he (or she) do continually? Sows discord

2. Words can also travel spreading good.

Proverbs 10:11a The mouth of the righteous *is* a well of life,

Indeed, words are powerful; but...

II. THE POWER OF WORDS IS LIMITED.

There are some things words cannot do.

A. Words cannot substitute for action.

Proverbs 14:23 In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter *leads* only to poverty.

B. Words cannot change the facts.

Proverbs 26:23–27 ²³ Fervent lips with a wicked heart *Are like* earthenware covered with silver dross.

²⁴ He who hates, disguises *it* with his lips, And lays up deceit within himself;

²⁵ When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, For *there are* seven abominations in his heart;

²⁶ *Though his* hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

²⁷ Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.

This verse is an eloquent exposition of the saying “the truth will come out.” All the deceit and smooth talk in the world will not alter the facts of a matter which are eventually exposed.

C. Words cannot compel response.

1. Right words cannot force a right response.

Proverbs 29:19 A servant will not be corrected by mere words; For though he understands, he will not respond.

For good to be accomplished, right words and right response must be joined.

2. Wrong words cannot force a wrong response.

Derek Kidner in Proverbs says, “The most spicy gossip has power over the listener only in so far as he is himself ‘an evildoer’ and a walking ‘falsehood,’ in whom the taste for carrion can overpower the love of truth.”

Proverbs 17:4 An evildoer gives heed to false lips; A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.

III. THE BIBLE WARNS US OF SPEAKING HURTFUL WORDS.

A. We are not to bear false witness (Exodus 20:16)

The commandment not to bear false witness simply means “do not communicate anything but the truth.”

1. **By lying** – the most obvious violation of the command.
2. **By deceiving**

Deception can occur with true words by

- partial information
- inflection
- implication
- omission

Deception occurs when the full truth is intentionally not communicated.

Psalm 52:2-5 ²Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. ³You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah ⁴You love all devouring words, *You* deceitful tongue. ⁵God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of *your* dwelling place, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

B. We must not slander a person.

Slander is giving false information with the intent to hurt.

Proverbs 16:27 KJV An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.

Where does the ungodly person get much of the evil they tell? They dig it up.

C. We are not to gossip.

Gossip need not involve a lie.

Gossip is sharing harmful information about some person with someone who is not a part of the problem or the solution.

Gossip fuels more “fires” in churches than any other single source.

Proverbs 26:20 Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out; And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.

Lest we think that God makes light of the sins of the tongue, let us read a few passages that show God’s reaction to such misuse of the gift of speech.

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

- A proud look
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked plans
- Feet that are swift in running to evil
- A false witness *who* speaks lies
- And one who sows discord among brethren.

Three of the seven are sins using the tongue.

IV. WORDS, RIGHTLY USED, ARE WONDERFUL!

A. The Marks of Good Words

1. They are honest.

Proverbs 16:13 Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings, And they love him who speaks *what is* right.

Matt. 5:37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

2. They are few.

Proverbs 17:28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; *When* he shuts his lips, *he is considered* perceptive.

The above is the divine inspiration of the modern proverb "Better to be silent and thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt."

Proverbs 10:19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.

Proverbs 21:23 Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.

3. They are calm.

Proverbs 17:27 He who has knowledge spares his words, *And* a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.

We should be calm in our reply because...

- a. It gives time for a fair hearing. (Proverbs 18:13, 17)
- b. It allows tempers to cool. (Proverbs 15:1)

c. Its influence is strong. (Proverbs 25:15, Proverbs 16:21)

Proverbs 19:11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory *is* to overlook a transgression.

4. They are appropriate.

Proverbs 15:23 A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word *spoken* in due season, how good *it is!*

Words are appropriate when the right words are said at the right time.

5. They are kind.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 12:25 Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.

B. What makes for good words?

1. Thought

Perhaps the useful warning "Please engage brain before putting mouth in gear" is based on the following truth.

Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.

Most of the harm done through evil speaking is because we spoke too quickly without thinking.

2. Character

Ultimately, what we say is the result of what we are.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life.

Our Lord put it plainly.

Matt. 12:34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.