



A WORD OF WISDOM ON WORDS • PROVERBS 16:24; 18:21 • 7/31/2022

MAIN POINT

Pastor Chuck will be discussing Two tables (Prov 15:16-17, 17:1-2) creating a life-giving home. Christians are called to build up individuals and communities with encouraging words.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When was the last time you felt really encouraged by someone's words to you?

Who is the most encouraging person you know? What qualities make him or her stand out from others?

We live in a culture that often feeds on the drama caused by people's harsh words to one another. Reality shows and talk shows frequently thrive on this, and social media is a prime breeding ground for negative speech. Biting sarcasm, insults, and making fun of others are often viewed as forms of comedy rather than hurtful comments. But how are followers of Christ called to communicate with others? In this study, we will look at the purpose behind speaking kind and encouraging words to one another, as well as some of the consequences of speaking harshly.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE TWO VOLUNTEERS READ PROVERBS 16:24 AND PROVERBS 18:21.

When have you seen words heal someone? Why do you think our words carry so much power to speak life or death over someone?

The Bible constantly reminds us of how powerful our words are. From the beginning of time, we see that God's words have immense power. In Genesis He spoke the entire universe into existence, and He could destroy it with a word as well. Being made in His image, our words carry both creative and destructive power. And since we are created to be in community, our words have particular power to build or tear apart our relationships. We must therefore be all the more conscious of our words throughout the day.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 18:2.

Give a modern-day example that illustrates this proverb.

In which area(s) of your life do you too quickly offer your opinions without first listening to understand?

Many people are very quick to criticize or make fun of someone else without ever taking time to get to know the other person and understand them. But we can never build relationships or have any real influence in a person's life if we are driven by the needs to be right, to prove another person wrong, or to build ourselves up at another's expense. Furthermore, when our goal is to live as witnesses of Christ's salvific power and goodness, we need to be all the more careful of how we speak because we represent Jesus and His kingdom. Why would unbelievers want to know Jesus if His followers have harsh words?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:10-11.

According to Paul, what is the reason that Jesus died for us? How do these words about Jesus' death give us all the more reason to speak encouraging words to each other?

How humbling it is to know that Jesus loves us so much, He died a terrible death so that we can live with Him now and for eternity! Not only does this cause us to want to be more like Him, but it also is much harder to speak harsh words to others when we view them through the lens of how much Jesus loves them.

What are some harsh words you say that, although they may be funny to you, actually hurt others and hinder your witness?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 10:24-25.

What does “the day” refer to in this passage? Why do you think the author said we need to encourage each other “all the more” as time goes on?

What are some ways we can “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”?

The author of Hebrews exhorted us to be intentional and kingdom-minded in the way we interact with each other. Instead of speaking harshly or foolishly with one another, we should use our words to call out the best in each other.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CHRONICLES 10:6-7.

The elders told Rehoboam that the Israelites would always be his servants if he was kind. Rehoboam’s peers, however, told him to be even harsher with the Israelites than Solomon was. Rehoboam took his peers’ advice and told the Israelites he would be much harder on them than Solomon was. The result was that all the tribes of Israel, except Judah, rebelled against him.

What did the elders understand about kindness that Rehoboam and his peers did not?

Do you ever find yourself viewing kindness as weakness? How is there power in kindness?

Ironically, Rehoboam’s father had written a very helpful proverb on the power of kindness: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). Kindness is powerful because it reveals God’s character to others in ways that harsh words and attempts to control others never will.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 50:4.

Who gave the speaker His tongue? What does he use His tongue for?

What kind of relationship does the speaker have with God?

Isaiah 50:4-9 is one of four “Servant Songs” found in Isaiah (42:1-7, 49:1-7, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). “Servant” ultimately is identified with Christ, though the original audience probably identified the Servant as purified Israel. Yet each of these Servant Songs ultimately talks about or speaks in the voice of the Messiah. It is therefore very appropriate to read these verses with Jesus in mind. Here, we see Jesus exemplifying what an intimate relationship with the Father looks like. Just as He constantly listened to the Father to know what to say and do to lead us to eternal life (John 12:49-50), so the kinds of words we speak to others should come out of the time we spend with the Father.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Are you a person who easily speaks kind words to others? If not, why do you think this is difficult for you?

Where and with whom do you need to use more kind words and stop using harsh, negative, or worthless words?

PRAYER

Ask the Father to give you the humility to listen more than you speak, to seek understanding more than airing your own opinions, and to walk with Him intimately so that you can speak words of life over those around you.

COMMENTARY

| PROVERBS 16:24

16:24 One expects anything medicinal to be bitter and anything sweet to be harmful, but pleasant words—morally uplifting speech—are both sweet and health-giving.

| PROVERBS 18:21

18:21 The tongue is powerful (Jms 3:1-12). Those who love the tongue and eat its fruit are those who choose to live or die under its power, like those who live by the sword (Gen 27:40; Mt 26:52), by the law (Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11; Rm 10:5; Gal 3:12), or by faith (Hab 2:4; Rm 1:17; Gal 3:11). Prudent speech brings life (v. 20; 12:14; 13:2; 21:23), and wicked or excessive speech brings death (13:3; Mt 15:18-19).

| PROVERBS 18:2

Profundity, not verbosity, is the mark of wisdom (Prov. 17:27; 18:4). Even an imbecile can appear intelligent if he can avoid putting his foot in his mouth, but this is all but impossible for a fool (Prov. 17:28; 18:2).

| 1 THESSALONIANS 5:10-11

5:10. According to Paul, the life of the believer is secure, determined, safe in the hands of God. Christ died so that whether “awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.” Paul’s use of the “asleep” metaphor goes back to its usage in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, referring to death, not moral failure as in 5:6–7. Christians who die, “sleep” in the sense that it is not the end. One day the trumpet of God will arouse the dead to bodily transformation

5:11. This assurance of salvation, of transformation into the image of Christ, should encourage us. As we are encouraged, we must continually talk about it and remind one another of our future, so that we do not grow weary or lose heart in the spiritual battles that rage. Every Christian has a responsibility to encourage others in the faith. In an age that is prone to criticism and fault-finding, the same fault-finding attitude can creep into the church. It can become natural to talk about others or critique their performance instead of examining our own hearts or encouraging others toward godliness.

While encouragement inspires us to keep on track spiritually, building each other up deals with investing in others. We should add to other people in such a way that they will be spiritually stronger. In this way, we encourage maturity and fortification of character. We need to look upon all persons as those for whom Christ died. They are eternal soul-spirits just as valuable as we are. We have a responsibility to encourage them to remain faithful and growing until the end.

| HEBREWS 10:24-25

10:24-25. This exhortation calls us to responsibility to one another. The appeal to consider demands concentrated attention. The goal of this attention was to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. As Christians we have a corporate responsibility. We must help others who stumble and falter. We must concentrate on the needs of others and not on our individual salvation only. To spur other believers forward in the Christian life, followers of Christ must meet together. Some of the readers of Hebrews were neglecting to meet together for worship, and this limited their ability to give and receive encouragement toward good works. Christians who meet together with the aim of promoting godliness and love for one another can be remarkably successful in their ventures.

| 2 CHRONICLES 10:6-7

10:5-7 King Solomon had been known for his wisdom and his ability to decide difficult questions (1Ki 3:28). His son, however, was unable to decide how to respond to this simple request. First he went to the older counselors, those who had served alongside Solomon, and asked them what he

should do. They replied with the obvious answer: when you are confronted with an ultimatum from the populace and your entire kingdom is at stake, and you have it in your power to give in to the ultimatum with little difficulty, give the people what they ask for.

| ISAIAH 50:4

50:4 The first-person speaker (Me) is the Servant (v. 10). For this reason, the HCSB capitalizes the pronoun since the Servant ultimately is identified with Christ, though the original audience probably identified the Servant as purified Israel. Alternatively, a number of scholars identify the Servant in this poem as Isaiah. The speaker is a student of God, trained to provide encouragement to those who are weary. Each morning God awakens Him with new insight.