



EVERY WORD MATTERS • PROVERBS 18:21 • 7/17/2022

MAIN POINT

The Book of Proverbs speaks more about the power of the tongue than any other issue. Every word matters to God. Pastor Chuck will be going over the following Proverbs 18:21, others selected proverbs 12:22-23,16:24,17:28,27:5-6.

INTRODUCTION

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

What are some meaningful words that you can easily recall having encouraged you in the past?

What are some words you have used in the past that you quickly regretted?

The Bible has much to say in both the Old and New Testaments about the power of the tongue. Among those members hard to tame, the tongue certainly ranks high on the list. Today we'll look to God's wisdom in Proverbs to learn how we can use our words in ways that bring glory to God rather than shame to ourselves and pain to others.

UNDERSTANDING

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

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 10:11; 12:19, 22; 18:21.

Collectively, how do these proverbs speak to the power of the tongue? What good can it do? What harm can it cause?

The tongue has the power to do much evil or much good. For the believer, with a tongue submitted to Christ, our speech should always be the kind that acts as salt and light in this

world. When we use our words for good, blessings—both to us and to others—will naturally follow.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 17:4 AND 18:8.

The Bible has general warnings for us about our speech, but also specific instructions for ways to avoid the kind of speech that brings harm.

Why do you think gossip is so attractive?

What steps can we take to avoid malicious talk?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 10:21; 13:3; 20:15; 12:25.

As important as it is to avoid certain types of speech (both talking and listening), believers also need to use their speech actively for good. This includes sharing wisdom and knowledge, encouraging others, and knowing when to be silent.

What are some ways we can impart God's wisdom to others through our speech?

How can opening our mouths lead to personal ruin?

When have you seen an encouraging word ease someone's anxiety?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 12:22; 31:8-9.

Why do you think God reserves such strong language for the sin of lying?

What kind of damage can be done by lying?

How can our speech be used instead to deliver justice?

God reserves some of His strongest condemnation for those who lie. After all, it was Satan's initial lie that led mankind to ruin. While lying leads to injustice, the opposite of lying is speaking in a way that boldly stands up for others.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PROVERBS 14:23.

What exactly is "endless talk"? In what ways does endless talk get in the way of hard work?

The final caution in our study is for the overuse of the tongue in idle speech. God has entrusted good work to us, and as good stewards we must be about His business. Exhort others with God's truth. Enlighten others with God's wisdom. Embrace the kind of speech that helps rather than hurts.

APPLICATION

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

In what situations do you need to be more careful about listening before you speak?

Do you know someone who has anxiety? How can you use your words to ease that person's anxiety this week?

How can you use your speech to help or encourage someone today?

What are some specific steps you can take to develop a pattern of speech that honors God?

PRAYER

For your closing prayer time, give your group members the opportunity to voice prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God, who has granted us the gift of speech. Pray that we would speak with confidence and hope as we fight against Satan's attacks this week. Pray that the Holy Spirit will teach us and lead us to exhibit His fruit in our lives, especially in the ways that we use our words.

COMMENTARY

| THE TONGUE

The tongue (Hb. *lashon*, Gk. *glossa*) is the organ of speech. In both the OT and NT the word is also used for languages spoken (Isa. 28:11–12; Acts 2:4, 11) as well as for the people who are represented by those languages (Isa. 66:18; Rev. 5:9). The word is also used of the tongues of animals, especially when humans are said to take on some animallike quality related to the tongue, such as having a poisonous tongue like an asp (Job 20:16).

Because the tongue is the instrument of speech, many passages use the word metaphorically (or metonymically) to praise or criticize the kinds of speech in which humans engage. The speech that comes from the tongue can be either good or evil (Ps. 120:2; Prov. 6:17; 10:20; James 3:7–12). Proverbs addresses these matters in picturesque language. "The tongue of the righteous is

pure silver” (10:20 HCSB). “The tongue of the wise [brings] healing, ... but a lying tongue [is for] only a moment” (12:18–19). “The tongue that heals is a tree of life” (15:4). “A ruler can be persuaded through patience, and a gentle tongue can break a bone” (25:15). Finally, for the “capable wife,” “loving instruction is on her tongue” (31:26).

The tongue can be a window into the human heart. It pronounces the thoughts and intents contained in the heart, which could be good (Ps. 34:10) or evil (Pss. 34:13; 52:2; 109:2; 120:2–3; Isa. 59:3). The tongue is important in demonstrating one’s true relationship to God. For the unbeliever the tongue is an instrument of deceit, showing man’s true nature (Rom. 3:13). Jesus said that it is by men’s words that they are justified or condemned (Matt. 12:37).

Controlling the tongue is one of the keys to a successful life (Prov. 21:23; James 3:2; 1 Pet. 3:10). It is so potent that both death and life are in its power (Prov. 18:21). The tongue is sharp, even as sharp as a sword (Ps. 64:3) or an arrow (Jer. 9:3, 8).