

The Art of Living

Wisdom from the Book of Proverbs

Watch Your Language

Series Overview

In this series, we're exploring the book of Proverbs to learn the art of living with wisdom.

Sermon Introduction

Have you ever said something and then wished you could take it back? (I'll spare you from answering... of course you have!) In his letter in the New Testament, the Apostle James writes, "If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). Nothing reveals our character and exposes our ignorance more readily than our words. If you want to live wisely, watching your language is a good place to start.

Passage: Proverbs 18:21 & select verses (NIV)

Prov. 18:21 The tongue has the power of life and death;
 and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Personal Reflection and Group Discussion Questions

1. Read Prov. 18:21 above. What stands out to you? Do you think Solomon is overstating the power of our words? What do you think he means by "and those who love it will eat its fruit"?
2. Can you think of a time when someone spoke life into you, perhaps through comfort or encouragement? How about a time when someone cut you down? In both instances, why do you think their words affected you so deeply?
3. Two dangers Solomon warns us to avoid are speaking too much (cf. Prov. 10:10, 19; 15:2) and speaking without thinking (cf. Prov. 13:13; 18:2, 13; 21:23; 29:20). According to these passages, what are some of the dangers of too many words or speaking rashly?
4. Reflect for a moment: do you choose your words carefully or do you tend to ramble on? What do you think others might say about you?

5. The wisdom of Prov. 25:20 and 27:14 is that the timing of our words matters. Have you ever had someone tell you something that was meant to be encouraging or uplifting, but in a moment that it did more harm than good? How can you avoid being tone-deaf when trying to help others who are hurting?
6. Prov. 31:8-9 directs us to use our words, not only to encourage and comfort others, but to speak up in defense of other people. Who do you think of when you think of those who lack the platform or power to speak up for themselves? Do you think you have a responsibility to speak up for them?
7. When you consider the importance of your words, do you think it's significant that Jesus is called "the Word" (John 1:1-3, 14)? Is there a parallel between our words and Jesus as *the Word*, which John ties back to Genesis 1? (cf. Colossians 1:15-20, Prov. 8:22-36)

Prayer

Often a position of submission helps us physically connect with the spiritual reality of meeting God. A posture of kneeling with open hands can demonstrate our willingness to submit to God's power.

- Give praise and worship God with your words.
- Admit if there are ways that you've either chosen your words or used your words unwisely.
- Ask God to bring to your mind anyone you've hurt with your words and for the courage to seek their forgiveness.
- Thank him that Jesus is *the Word* through whom all things were created, and through whom God speaks life and blessing to us.