

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

06.09.2024 | Wisdom for Your Words | Proverbs 8:13; 12:20; 16:24; 18:21 | Dr. Tim Wiarda

In the book of Proverbs this morning, and the theme is wisdom for your words. And there's dozens of Proverbs that speak about our use of words. If you want a couple of key verses, consider chapter 16, verse 24. "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the body." We're moving in a little different direction. Verse 12, 22. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight." So we should know by now how to read, how to come to the book of Proverbs. But let me ask again, how do we come to the book of Proverbs? Well, first, we need to come like a son or daughter would come to a wise father or mother who is giving them heartfelt counsel. Chapter 1, you might want to look a minute, verse 8. "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching." So this counsel, it's not like the quick do this, do that, or it's not nagging, meaningless nagging. Instead, picture a thought-out conversation where a really good parent chooses a moment, sits down with a young adult child, and gives the best counsel they've got, a wise parent who understands God's ways and how God has made the world. And this parent talks about life and death issues. Chapter 3, verse 1. "My son, do not forget my teaching. Let your heart keep my commandments for a length of days and years of life and peace, they will add to you." In chapter 18, it says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." But another way we need to come to the book of Proverbs is like we're listening to wisdom herself. Chapter 8 begins, "Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand. Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals, she cries aloud, "To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of men."

You know, we joke about, you know, a person who thinks they know everything. He thinks he's wisdom personified. Well, this really is wisdom personified. I picture a woman standing in a robe, you know, tall and noble, some kind of wreath or diadem on her forehead, and it's lady wisdom. It's the Bible's way of picturing God's own eternal wisdom, the wisdom with which he created the world. In chapter 8, look at verse 22. Wisdom says, "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work," the first of his acts of old. Verse 27, "When he established the heavens, I was there." Verse 30, "Then I was beside him like a master workman. I was his daily delight." And these Proverbs give us wisdom. They tell us how God made the world and how it now works. God stands behind these little wise sayings. And just like the wise parent, lady wisdom has a lot to counsel to give about our use of words. Chapter 8, verse 8. Wisdom talks about her own words. "All the words of my mouth are righteous. There is nothing twisted or crooked in them." And speaking to us, verse 13 of chapter 8, just the last phrase in that verse, "Perverted speech I hate," says wisdom.

So this morning we're going to look at two themes in Proverbs about our use of righteous words in a righteous way for righteous purposes. One is, use words to do good, and the other is, do not tell lies. So using righteous words to do good. The first thing the counsel that wisdom give emphasizes is, don't underestimate the power and potential of your words for doing good. I mean, just according to Proverbs, just how good are righteous words? Well, 16:24 says, gracious words, we've already read this, are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. 10:11 says, the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. 25:11 says, a word fairly spoken is like, "Apples of gold in a setting of silver." And according to these Proverbs, certain qualities mark out the kinds of words that function as a fountain of life. A gentle tongue, an honest answer, gracious words, a soft answer, wise reproof. And according to Proverbs, what can you accomplish with righteous words? Chapter 10, the lips of the righteous feed many. Chapter 12, the tongue of the wise brings healing. Again in Chapter 12, anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. Chapter 14, a truthful witness saves lives. Chapter 15, a soft answer turns away wrath. Again in 15, the lips of the wise spread knowledge so we can feed someone, heal someone, make someone glad, save someone's life, quench someone's burning anger, and give a confused person knowledge they need to make decisions.

Let's talk about us. I mean, Proverbs says all these wonderful things about the positive impact of well-spoken words. What does that mean in terms of our own practical action? Well, I think two main things. Wherever we are now, in our practice of using words to do good, we need to be even more alert and proactive and faithful in picking up the opportunities God gives us. And it also means to do that well, we must learn as much as we can about how to speak to people wisely and effectively. I'd like to read Ephesians 2:10. You know, it's hard to chase down all these different Proverbs I'm going to be citing, but if you want to look at Ephesians chapter 2 a minute, I'm actually going to start reading at verse 8. I think a lot of us know Ephesians 2:8, and 9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith."

And this is not your own doing, it's the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. In other words, we're saved by faith. It's not what we have done and accomplished. It's not our works. It's God's gift in Jesus Christ. But that doesn't mean there's no works, because verse 10 goes on, "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Now think about that picture. If you belong to Jesus, you're created new in Christ Jesus, and you're fashioned to do good works. And those good works have been prepared before us, before we even get to them. I mean, along the path in front of us, good works are just waiting for us to arrive. And all we need to do, it says, is walk in them. That means when we get to that point in the path, we need to do them. And the fact is, many of those good works have to do with speaking good words to someone who needs encouragement or comfort or guidance.

So I want us to think about how this Bible teaching connects with our own life and experience. And I just want to share a few thoughts that come to me as I reflect on my own experience. And if that can be helpful to you, as you think about yours. So one thought is that I have missed many opportunities. Probably most of you know the Mario Brothers game. You know, this little plumber guy who, racing along a path, and all along the way are these coins, and you grab what you can. And when I played, I missed a ton of them. And when it comes to approaching, when it comes to the opportunities in my real life to speak an encouraging or a healing or a guiding word, I've also missed a lot. I mean, I think especially of chances I missed in my younger days. I mean, it's still always there. But like when I was in high school, both in church and in my school, proactively helping others was just not much on my radar. I think I was pretty self-centered. Sometimes I think if I could go back and relive some of those situations and relationships that were just calling out for somebody to speak a little word.

Now, walking with Jesus, it's not really like Mario Brothers. I mean, it's not a frantic race. It's a steady day-by-day walk. And you don't have to be a super gamer to get all the coins. But we do need to be alert and faithful to the opportunities God gives us. Well, another aspect of my experience, I mean, I have often seen someone who I think needs some kind of encouragement or comfort or witness, and I try to say a word, but I'm not very good at it. I'm just talking about myself. I am clumsy. I hem and haw. You know, the expression "tongue-tied" sums it up very well. It's like, you know, I've got thread wrapped around my tongue and it doesn't move very well. I can't formulate specific thoughts. I can't find the right words. Now, that's me. I know many of you have personalities and gifts that make it a lot more natural for you to use words to encourage and heal and give life. It might even be a spiritual gift.

In Romans 12, Paul writes that we as believers have gifts that differ according to the grace that is given us. So let us use them. And he lists all these different gifts, and one of them is, "Let the one who exhorts, who's been given that special ministry or that gift, let the one who exhorts...exhort." That's the ESV translation. Exhort means to urge someone urgently and point them in the right direction, give them the boost they need. NIV, that Greek word, could be translated the way the NIV does. "Let the one who encourages give encouragement." Exhortation, encouragement, talking about the positive use of words to do someone good. And whether we have a special gift or not, whether you're like me, kind of Kim and Haw or wherever, we all need to do what we can. Because whoever you are, there are situations in people where basically you're the one to speak those words that are sweetness to the soul, health to the body, and a fountain of life.

Another part of my experience through the years, I think I have learned a few things about talking to people, some from the Bible, some from trial and error, some from books or classes. So it is possible to grow in this area, to learn and grow so we need to work and keep improving. What kind of situations call for good and helpful words? To me, they seem to fall into two categories. First, what I would call reach out situations. A lot of the Proverbs seem to speak about deliberate words that are spoken at a crucial moment. Not casual talk, but something you have time to think about and prepare for. The kind of situation where you deliberately go to a person or give them a call or send them a text. It might be someone who I haven't been in touch with for a while, but I know they face some very challenging situations, so I feel time to get in touch. Maybe someone who I know has taken a very severe hit in life and surely needs comfort. Someone who shows signs of being down or anxiety or being in need of encouragement. Or maybe a person who seems to really need advice and guidance. Maybe correction. Or someone I've got relational tension with. So those are the reach out situations. There's also, and Proverbs speaks to this, there's also response and reaction situations. Someone asked me a direct question on a controversial topic and I've got to respond. Or I've got to respond to someone who's angry and upset.

Or someone does something outrageous and offensive and I've got to decide how to shape and control my reaction. Or someone makes a statement or claim that pretty much demands some kind of response.

Look at the experience of Nicodemus in John chapter 7. I mean we all know Nicodemus. He's the one who came to Jesus by night and didn't get what Jesus was trying to tell him. But a couple things were told about Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee and he came to Jesus by night. And you put those two things together, the point is he was sensitive to people knowing, his other Pharisee friends I guess, that he had gone to see Jesus. This was an issue he had wrestled with a little bit. Well you come to chapter 7, toward the end of chapter 7, and there is Nicodemus with him, there's the Pharisees I guess you could say, and Nicodemus is there with him. Chapter 7, verse 48, the Pharisees have sent some temple guards to arrest Jesus. They come back, they don't have Jesus. He said, "Well, you know, the guards say we were listening to Jesus and no one ever smoked like this man, so basically they didn't arrest him." And the Pharisees say, "What's wrong with you?" And they say beginning in verse 48, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?" But this crowd that does not know the law, they're accursed. And Nicodemus, who had gone to him before and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" And they replied, "Are you from Galilee too?" In other words, are you with Jesus too?

Now, you look at that. At this point, Nicodemus could not avoid communicating something, even if he had remained silent, that would have sent a loud message when they said, "Have any of us believed in him?" Now, Nicodemus' answer to his Pharisee friends might not seem to us very bold. I mean, he doesn't say, "I believe in Jesus," or he didn't say, "What's wrong with you?" Accusing him in as a man. He just asks kind of a simple question, but in a quiet way, he's giving a very smart and pointed answer. It's a pretty good spur-of-the-moment reaction, because what he's saying is, "You say these people don't know the law." Well, do you know the law? "You say these people are accursed because they don't know the law." Well, wait a minute. Doesn't our law? In other words, he spoke to the issue, he defined his position, and he paid the price because they got after him then.

So, I mean, there's a hundred situations where a reaction is called for, and we need wisdom. So, let's reflect on our life and experience and see where the wisdom we see in Proverbs applies to our life. Here's a few suggestions. I'm not Lady Wisdom or even a wise parent, but some suggestions. In reach-out situations, saying something is probably better than saying nothing. In other words, do reach-out. If you don't know what else to say, it never hurts just to give a warm greeting and say something affirming. Content of your words may not be as important as just the fact that you've communicated a little bit of friendship and concern. On the other hand, maybe don't say too much. Now, every situation is different. Maybe you do need to say quite a bit. But Proverbs 10, 17 says, "Where words are many, transgression is not lacking. Whoever restrains his lips is prudent." Maybe particularly in a reaction situation. Or 17, 27, "Whoever restrains his words has knowledge. He who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." Another thing, when reaching out, give some thought to your manner and timing. 15, 23 in Proverbs, a word in season, how good it is. Maybe a word out of season is good. 25, 11, a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Not just what you say, but how you say it. And maybe we need to sometimes give thought to who we are in relation to the person we're speaking to. I mean, is it someone you're close to or just a more general friend? Are we in an equal kind of relationship, you know, neighbor to neighbor, church member to church member? Or are we in different positions somehow, like a parent speaking to a child or a child speaking to their parent?

Now, I can think of cross-cultural situations where talking to someone, I began to realize sometimes a little too late that there was some kind of a hierarchy in play that was very different from American culture, and I just wasn't aware of it, and it kind of pretty much meshed up my communication. Maybe the person I'm talking to is thinking, "Who is he? He's just not his place to talk to me about this." Or it may be something who maybe is looking at me as someone who, you know, a pastor or a missionary or a teacher who should have some more authority, and they're asking themselves, "Why is he more directive and authoritative?" So we need to be on guard. What is the right way, the right time, and how can I talk? But those opportunities are out there. God puts them in our way, along our path, and we can't run away from them.

So another thought, whatever else you do, guard the relationship. I don't mean wimp out. I mean, some years ago in Singapore, in the church we were in, I was supposed to kind of give some shepherding a little bit to the young worship leaders, and, you know, there were times I would sit there during a worship service and listen to them and watch them,

and I'd go, "Oh, God, all the things, they're just doing this whole wrong, they're saying all their own thing." And I've got to go talk to them, and I would go up to them after the service, and I kind of smiled at them and said, "Good job. You did a good job." I always felt good about those communications, until a month later when they led worship again and repeated the same disastrous mistake. But, you know, we were in the Ivory Coast for three years just after our retirement, working with the International Mission Board. And I remember there was a senior local leader that we worked very closely with there, and he was a great person, and we loved him. But, you know, he just often, you know, we just had different ways of viewing things, different ideas, and there were different cultural forces at work when we communicated and worked together, and we were foreigners, and, you know, not always so good for foreigners to tell local people what they're doing right or wrong.

And one way or another, we were having this great relationship on the one hand, but it was always a little bit awkward footing. And I remember for two years we were just always thinking, "If we could just get him to do this, or if we could just convince him of that," and about six months before we finished our three-year term, I remember we got to thinking, my wife and I, "You know, let's prioritize just the relationship." In fact, not only with this brother, but with everybody we're dealing with here. Let's just prioritize, because after we go, what's really going to count is just the relationship we leave behind, or the memory they have. And we worked on that. And I remember just a week or so before we left the country to come back to the U.S., we were at a meeting, and he did something he had never done before. He said to my wife and I, "Come aside a minute. I want to have a word with you." So he was kind of doing the reach out, I guess. And I can't remember all his words, but just in four or five minutes, his point was, "You know, I know maybe I said some things, or maybe I, you know, this or that or the other, but, you know, and wow, it was just so great to kind of realize that we could just get and express our love for one another and anything issue that was dealt with. So, you know, we left with this sense that we had maybe not got everything done the way we wanted to get done, but there's a brother there now, there's relationships, and we still are in touch, and there's still opportunities to just share in the Lord's work together.

Well, finally, a piece of advice. Flavor your words with the good news of peace. In Colossians, Paul says, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt." He's talking about the salt of the gospel because in Ephesians he says, "Have your feet sandaled with the readiness of the gospel of peace." And when he says that, he's looking back to something Isaiah said, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." So I'm not talking about, and Paul's not talking about necessarily full-on gospel sharing, but just a seasoning, a taste, a reminder, a pointer, you're talking to someone of just some small aspect of the immense and many-sided good news that results from Jesus Christ entering into the world. You know, it's no good talking about buying things if your bank account is empty. And it's no good trying to address the pains and fears and discouragement, ignorance, or anger of a friend if you can't point them to a solid and accessible source of redemption in this messy and confusing and frightening world. I mean, what do you really in the end have to offer?

Okay, in our world, along with the bad things, the world does offer some genuine good, some genuine hope, some genuine solutions within certain limited boundaries. But beyond those limits, when it comes to the deepest human problems and the biggest issues we face, we have absolutely no solutions, nothing to hope for, nothing worth knowing, unless it's the good news of God's redeeming action through Jesus Christ. So whenever we talk, it would be so good if one of the things that kind of pierces through and lingers in your friend's mind is the message, "Your God reigns." So let's be alert and faithful with the opportunities to good with our words, and let's keep learning and growing.

Okay, a second thing. Don't underestimate how serious lies are. Do not tell lies. Proverbs tells us, "God hates them." 12:20, lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. Or look at 6:19. Proverbs 6:19. Actually, I'm going to begin at verse 16. "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him, haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers." On the list of things God hates, items 2 and 6 are about telling lies. Lies will be judged according to Proverbs. Chapter 10, the perverse tongue will be cut off. Chapter 12, truthful words endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. It's not going to last. So wisdom calls us to clear our lives from anything false, deceitful, or willfully untrue. Chapter 4, put away from you crooked speech. Put devious talk far from you. You think, "I depend on my lies. I don't dare step away from telling them." Wisdom says, "Grit your teeth and rip them out of your life." I mean really, God is a God of truth. Satan is the father of lies.

It's that simple. We've got to make our choice. According to Proverbs, much human lying arises out of hate and aims at hurting people. Chapter 10, the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Chapter 12, the words of the wicked lie in wait for blood. Chapter 26, a lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin. And here's something Proverbs says that maybe you haven't thought about. Proverbs warns against listening to falsehoods and participating in them. 17, 4, an evil doer listens to wicked lips. A liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue. If you don't want to be an evil doer, don't listen to lies. If you don't want to be a liar, don't listen to liars. In some situations we may be totally innocent, just fooled by a clever liar. But sometimes we're not so innocent. We gladly listen to a lie because it supports a bias or a desire we already have in our heart. We sort of know that what a person is saying is probably not true, but it allows us to believe what we want to believe so we grab hold of it. Sometimes when we listen to lies we're already tainted by greed or hatred or jealousy or some kind of desire. It's like we're ripe to be tempted by Satan, and Satan speaks his temptation through lying human lips. Exodus 23.1 says, "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness."

I mean, how do we spread a false report? Well, we cheer it, we repeat it, we click a button and send a false message on to everybody else. Bible says, "Don't join hands." I mean, maybe you don't say anything. Someone else is bearing fault with this. You're just standing there holding their hand. Bible says, "You shall not do this." It probably has some heavy themes, and this is one of them. Wisdom wants us to hate lies, shun and oppose liars, and be scared personally of lying. So, how do we apply this to our lives? Again, here's just some of my experience in relation to lies and lying. Okay, number one, like everybody else, I sometimes wonder how to handle extreme limit cases. I mean, what about complimenting somebody's cooking when, in fact, it's terrible? Or, what about those forms where at the end you're given a thousand words of legalese and a little box to tick that says, "I have read all these terms and I agree." I mean, I was at the dentist last week and I, I go, "Pfft, tick the box." Did I read that? Actually, no. What about the classic ethics class discussion topic, if terrorists asked where your family members were hiding and you could save their lives by telling a lie, would you do it?

Shall I tell you a story about my wife? You know, before we went to Ivory Coast, the mission board made us go through this orientation program seven weeks in Virginia. And one day they brought in a team to give training how to handle terrorist situations or how to handle being interrogated, because that happens to missionaries in different countries around the And so we're in the middle of this session and there was about 50 of us in this room and suddenly there's a boom and the door crashes open and it's three or four guys with hoods over their head rushing with guns and everybody, "Oh, we're all on the floor." So this is the simulation, right, to see how good we're doing with our training. And they went around and they grabbed, I don't know, a half a dozen of us and pulled us off into a side room and they pulled Gracia and I, we were one of these ones that got pulled off and, "Whoa, it was scary." And they put us in a little room with a guard and the chief guy and, "No talking, nobody say a word." And he went and after he left, the guard, after a few minutes, started grumbling about his leader and we started talking to him. And at one point he actually gave us a little piece of, gave one of the members a little piece of bread and suddenly the leader bursts in and says, "Where'd you get that bread?" And, you know, we're all going to get killed, you know, when the guard has been supposedly friendly and it was a tense moment and we're just all silent, silent, silent. And Gracia says, "Oh, I gave it to him." Okay, so that relieved all the pressure and we were okay and when they gave the report on how we did, we got high marks because Gracia said she gave him, "You know what, she really didn't." So now I know if a terrorist ever comes, Gracia is not going to tell them where I am.

Okay. But, you know, these are interesting questions. We can even, you know, you have different opinions, what you would do when the terrorists come and all that. But Proverbs is not designed to answer these theoretical, hypothetical questions. It's not ethics class, it's giving us practical wisdom for real and, you know, pertinent issues of life. And again, just to share my own experience and thoughts, I don't know how it is with you, but at an emotional level, I am actually scared of lying. And I think that's a good thing. It's not that I'm a noble person who always finds great joy in telling the truth. Sometimes telling the truth is a real pain. It's just that I'm scared of lying and I'm not scared of getting caught. I'm scared of having a bad conscience because I have this sense that lying is not just a matter of violating a cool principle. It's a matter of disobeying God. And as long as there's a lie that stands uncorrected, it's an issue in my relationship with God. And that's a worse pain than whatever loss might come from telling the truth. I mean, I can think of a time in college where I did, you know, the slightest little misinformation I gave to enable me to, you know, be considered to have completed all the requirements of the course. And that just troubled me and weighed on me because really it was kind of I told a lie. And I, in the end, I actually had to go to the professor and get my grade changed to solve that problem.

And, you know, I just don't like that kind of experience. So I'm a little afraid of getting in that situation. Another thing in my experience, if I'm going to get tempted, it's probably going to be a small lie. I remember filling out a mortgage application. Our first house. What a big deal. Can we get this? And just a tiny little detail. Wow. Do I dare tell them that? That might kill the whole thing. So let me just share. I mean, we all struggle in this area, but we need to keep a clear conscience before God. We need to, when it comes to the serious issues of life, make sure that we are killing the truth and not lying. But here are finally just some Bible principles I'd like to put before you. Number one, deceitful words in the mouth are almost a certain indicator of spiritual sickness or spiritual death in the heart.

I mean, Jesus said what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and defiles a person and he lists a bunch of things. And one of them is false witness. So dishonest speech is a pretty sure indicator of serious spiritual sickness. No matter what profession a person makes, what veneer of piety they display. And why is that? Well, we're justified by faith in Jesus Christ. We're dead in our sins if we're not justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Justified means we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We've been forgiven. We've been declared righteous before God. But according to the Bible, that status of righteousness, if it's real, is going to be accompanied by day-to-day practice of righteousness in our actions and words. And one of the components of practical Christian living is zero tolerance for lying. So let's not fool ourselves. Where there's spiritual corruption, there will be lies. And where there are lies, there's deep spiritual corruption.

The second Bible principle. For followers of Jesus, the heart is vitally important, but so are the optics. I mean the outward view you give to everyone around you, your witness. You've got, if you're a follower of Jesus, you've got the name of Jesus written all over you. You get associated with lies and lying. Jesus gets associated with lies and lying. You know, Paul describes how God's reputation is damaged when those who have a reputation of being his people act in an unrighteous way. You who boast in the law, dishonor God by breaking the law, for it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." Now that is true in every generation. But in the present climate in America with a lot of polarization, I think it's especially important for Christians to avoid joining hands with liars. I mean, genuine followers of Jesus who obey his commands and care about their witness in the world need to be real careful. Let me just picture an imaginary scene. It's kind of wild, but try to visualize it. There's a person who is telling what you suspect are lies. And you are standing next to them holding their hand like Exodus talked about. And you're wearing a t-shirt that says, "Jesus is my Lord." You say, "What if we don't know for sure whether the person is telling a lie?" Well, why associate the name of Jesus with what you even suspect to be stained with deceit and falsehood? Well, what if the person is, what they're saying is partly true? Well, you mix ten truths with one lie, it's still a lie. And you don't want to bring it anywhere near Jesus. I'm talking about optics right now. Okay.

A final Bible principle. Never forget that with Jesus we are on the winning side. I mean, one of the big reasons we lie is we think we will lose something if we don't. You know, a business deal is going to fall through. We're going to lose a promotion. Someone's going to lose an election. But with Jesus, you are never, never going to lose. You may suffer a little. You may not get everything you want. But this is the world that God created and in which God reigns and you are not going to lose if you are with Jesus. If God is for us, who can be against us? Revelation 12, 10. I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now is the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of Christ come and the accuser of our brothers, that is Satan, is thrown down." So don't compromise with lies. Don't act as if Satan and his team were stronger. Don't make deals with the devil. Every lying force in the world today is a thousand times weaker than the holy and righteous reign of Jesus Christ.

So we've been looking at two aspects, two different angles. What Proverbs says about our use of words positively calls us to use them to do good. Negatively calls us to rid our lives of all lying. Two factors unite those two themes. Both are rooted in the deep wisdom with which God created our world. If you want to live in line with the way God has made this world to be, this is wisdom. But secondly, both our use of words to do good and our getting rid of lies and telling the truth, both of those ways of living are full of power. Because in this fallen and threatening age, even in the troubles of this world, Satan is defeated, our victory is assured, and Jesus Christ reigns. And that's why we can use our words the way Proverbs tells us to.