

LESSON 8

A WORD FOR THE WEARY

Proverbs 12:18; Proverbs 12:25; Proverbs 16:24; Isaiah 50:4

ISAIAH 50:4 · PROVERBS 12:18, 25 · PROVERBS 16:24

Reading before class: Proverbs 12, Proverbs 16 and Isaiah 50:4.

Last week we spent an hour on what a word can tear down. This is the other side of it, and I want you to know going in that this lesson ends with you writing something.

1. Think of the single most encouraging thing anybody has ever said to you. Write down how long it took them to say it.

About seconds.

2. In your own words, what makes a person qualified to encourage somebody else? We will come back to this, and I expect your answer to change.
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A SWORD AND A MEDICINE

3. Read Proverbs 12:18. Solomon puts two kinds of speaker side by side. Describe each one.

4. Look at what the first man's words are compared to. Note that a sword thrust is quick. What does that tell you about how much time it takes to do this kind of damage?

5. Now look at the second half. Solomon says the tongue of the wise brings something. What is it, and what does that word assume about the person listening?

6. In your opinion, why does Solomon call the second man wise instead of calling him kind?
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THE WEIGHT AND WHAT LIFTS IT

7. Read Proverbs 12:25. Write the two halves.

8. Notice the picture in the first half. Anxiety does something physical to a man's heart. What is it?

9. Now look at what Solomon puts against that weight. It is not a solution to the problem and it is not money and it is not advice. What is it?

10. Think about how small that is compared to what it is lifting. Why would God arrange things so that something that costs nothing can move something that heavy?

THE HONEYCOMB

11. Read Proverbs 16:24. What are pleasant words compared to, and what two things do they do?

12. Solomon says sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. That is a strange pairing. What is he claiming reaches how far?

13. Put Proverbs 12:18, 12:25 and 16:24 side by side. All three make the same claim about what right words do. Say it in one sentence.

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. A rash word works like a sword and it takes no time at all.
2. A good word lifts a weight that anxiety put on a man's heart.
3. Pleasant words reach past the soul and into the bones.
4. Therefore Scripture treats words as medicine, not as manners.

THE EAR THAT GETS WOKEN UP

Now we come to the verse this lesson is built on, and it is going to take us somewhere you may not expect.

14. Read Isaiah 50:4. The speaker says God gave Him a tongue. What kind of tongue does He call it?

15. God gave that tongue for a purpose. Write the purpose out exactly as the verse states it.

16. Look closely at that purpose. It does not say to correct the weary one, or to advise him, or to fix his situation. What does it say?

17. Now the second half of the verse. I told you last week that God does something every morning. What does He awaken?

18. Read that again. The man whose job is to sustain the weary with a word has his EAR woken up every morning, not his mouth. Why would God do it in that order?

19. Go back to your answer to question 2. Does Isaiah 50:4 agree with you about what qualifies a person to encourage somebody?

- 20.** In your own words, what is a "tongue of disciples"? Notice that a disciple is by definition a person who is being taught.
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LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

- 1.** The tongue that sustains the weary is a given tongue, not a natural gift.
- 2.** Its stated job is to sustain, and your English Bible chose that word rather than save or fix.
- 3.** The ear gets awakened first and it gets awakened daily.
- 4.** Therefore the qualification for encouraging people is not that you are good with words. It is that you have been listening.

WHO IS TALKING IN ISAIAH 50

- 21.** Read Isaiah 50:4-6 together. Keep going past verse 4 into verses 5 and 6 and write down what happens to this speaker.
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- 22.** Your Bible probably capitalizes the pronouns in verse 4. Who do you believe is speaking here, and what in verses 5 and 6 makes you say so?
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- 23.** If that is who is speaking, then the pattern in verse 4 is not merely good advice. Whose habit are we being shown?
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WRITE THE NOTE

This is the part I told you about. Nobody leaves today without doing it.

- 24.** Name one person you know who is weary right now. Not in crisis. Weary.
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- 25.** Before you write anything to them, answer this: what do you actually know about what they are carrying? If the answer is very little, that is the assignment underneath the assignment.

- 26.** Now write the note. Not a verse by itself. Not "praying for you." Say the specific true thing you have noticed about them.

- 27.** Read what you wrote and check it against Ephesians 4:29 from two weeks ago. Does it build, does it fit this moment, and will it be gracious?

WORD STUDY · SUSTAIN THE WEARY ONE (ISAIAH 50:4)

Two words here, and they pull in opposite directions. Take the easy one first.

"The weary one" is a noun, not an adjective, and its sense is exactly that: "a weary one, a person who is weary." It appears four times in the whole Hebrew Bible. Look at the company it keeps. Judges 8:15, Gideon asking a town why they would not give bread to "your men who are weary." 2 Samuel 16:2, Ziba bringing wine "for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink." Both are men still on the march, still walking, needing bread and something to drink to keep walking. Not men who collapsed and had to be carried.

Now "sustain," and this one is genuinely difficult. I would rather you knew than not.

That verb appears twelve times in the Hebrew Bible, and eleven of them are bad. Its ordinary meaning is to bend, to twist, to pervert. It is the word in Job 8:3, "Does God pervert justice?" It is Amos 8:5, to cheat with dishonest scales. Psalm 119:78, the arrogant who subvert with a lie. Psalm 146:9, God thwarts the way of the wicked.

Isaiah 50:4 is the one exception out of twelve, the single place the word is read as helping or being of service. So the lexicons split, and so do the translations. Brown-Driver-Briggs gives only "be bent, crooked." Gesenius gives "to bend, to curve, to pervert." Strong gives "hasten; succor; speak in season." Your NASB reads "sustain the weary one with a word." The King James reads "speak a word in season to him that is weary." Same Hebrew, two very different English sentences, and neither translator was careless. Here is why I am telling you instead of picking one. Look at what both readings have in common. Either way, a word goes to a tired man from somebody who noticed he was tired. Whether the word holds him up or arrives at the right moment, the lesson is the same, and it does not depend on which reading wins. (And if the King James has it, notice that "in season" is the same idea we met in Ephesians 4:29 two weeks ago: a word fitted to the need of the moment.)

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. יָעֵץ, noun, sense weary one, four occurrences. תוּעַ, Qal infinitive construct, lemma glossed "bend; falsify; suppress," root "to bend; to falsify; to suppress," twelve occurrences, of which the sense to help (assist) is tagged 1 of 12 and stands at Isaiah 50:4; the remaining senses run to wrong, to pervert, to be bent, to stoop. Lexicons consulted: Brown et al.; Gesenius and Tregelles; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited. And note this, because it's the main point of this lesson. Whichever reading you take, Isaiah's man is not sent to rescue anybody. He is sent to hand a tired man something so he can keep going.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Isn't this just flattery with a Bible verse on it? And what about those of us who are not good with words?"

Two questions there and they deserve separate answers.

On flattery. Flattery says a thing that is not true in order to get something. Every passage we worked today requires the opposite. Proverbs 12:18 puts the healing tongue in the mouth of a WISE man, not an agreeable one. Ephesians 4:29, which we studied two weeks ago, requires a word to fit the need of the moment, and a compliment that does not fit the moment fails that test. Flattery is easy and it is generic. What Isaiah describes is specific, and specific is expensive, because it requires you to have paid attention.

On not being good with words. Read Isaiah 50:4 one more time and notice that the speaker does not claim to be good with words either. He says the tongue was GIVEN to him, and then he tells you the daily habit that stands behind it: his ear gets opened every morning.

So the answer to "I am not good with words" is not a class in words. Proverbs 12:25 says a good word makes a heavy heart glad, and it does not say an eloquent word. The people in this congregation who are best at this are not the best talkers. They are the ones who know what is going on with you.

FOR YOUR LIFE

28. Look back at your answer to question 2. Has it changed? Write what you would say now.

29. Go back to question 1. Somebody spent a few seconds on you years ago and you still have it. What does that tell you about the return on this kind of investment?

30. In your opinion, why do we hold back the good word so much more often than the harsh one? Both take about the same amount of breath.

- 31.** Isaiah's speaker gets his ear opened every morning. What would it take for that to be true of you, practically, this week?
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THIS WEEK

- 32.** Deliver the note you wrote at question 26. Write down the day you will give it, and how.
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- 33.** Write down one person you will simply ask a question of this week, with no intention of saying anything back. Isaiah's man listened first.
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Bring this workbook back next week. That closes Part Two. Part Three is five lessons long and it is the hardest ground in the quarter.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 9: What Grows Underground. This begins Part Three.

Read before class: Hebrews 12 and Ephesians 4.

One thing to watch for: Hebrews 12:15 warns about a root. Notice how many people the writer says get affected by it, and compare that number to how many the root belongs to.