

Alive and Well: The Art of Living Wisely

LESSON GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

Words are exceptionally powerful.

- **Head Change:** To know that our words affect others and expose our thoughts and feelings.
- **Heart Change:** To respond gratefully to the Holy Spirit who promises to give us wisdom with our words.
- **Life Change:** To be intentional about cleaning up our hearts, so that only clean words flow from our lips.

ICEBREAKER:

Before the days of being able to delete texts, did you ever mistakenly send a private message on a group chat? Have you ever sent an email to your boss that was intended for your boyfriend – or something equally mortifying? If you're brave enough, share your most embarrassing moment involving words.

INTRODUCTION:

The God who spoke the universe into existence has a lot to say about our words. Almost a quarter of the book of Proverbs is dedicated to instructions on how we are to speak – and not speak. In this session, we'll investigate how to apply God's wisdom to everything that comes out of our mouths. Here's to less embarrassment and hurt. More edification and healing.

As you watch today, write down how Pastor Lance Watson answers these questions.

1. How is the power of words demonstrated in the first chapter of Genesis?
2. James compares the tongue to _____.
3. What are two things our words can do when they penetrate the hearts and minds of others?
4. Why is it often wise to speak less?

REVIEW

If researchers are to be believed, the average person uses about 16 000 words per day. To whom did you say most of your words yesterday? If you were to play back a recording of everything you said, do you think you'd hear mostly building-up words or tearing-down words?

Pastor Watson points out that of the 915 verses in Proverbs, 222 of them deal with how we speak. Here are some examples: 'The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain; the words of the wicked conceal violent intentions... Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut. The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless' (Proverbs 10:11, 19-20). How do these verses convey the power of words? If you feel comfortable doing so, share about a time when someone's harsh words crushed your dream or your self-assurance. Share about a time when someone's kind, wise, timely words put wind in your sails, possibly even altering the trajectory of your life.

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Words have the power to get things done. The opening pages of the Bible detail how God spoke out the cosmic wonder of an infinite universe. Things happen when God speaks. Think of things you've said to your friends, spouse, colleagues, or kids today. How have your words incited action or reaction – or maybe even changed a life? Do you wish you could *unsay* something you've said to someone you care about?

Pastor Watson reminds us of the sobering truth that with a few words, someone can declare war and the repercussions will reverberate around the globe. Conversely, can you think of speeches by statesmen or stateswomen that have literally saved lives or changed the world for good?

Proverbs 12:18 warns that rash words can pierce people like swords. Of course, swords are also used to protect. Think about the words you used today around the office, in the school carpark, or at home. Were they piercing words, confirming what the world is teaching people about life and their worth, or were they protecting words, confirming what God is teaching them about life and their worth?

The words you use speak volumes about your character (Proverbs 10:11, 20). It's not a stretch to say that every time you open your mouth, people can see into your heart. Think back over some of the conversations you've had in the past week. Did you learn something new about someone because of how they used language?

Thankfully, with God's help and strength, we can always aim higher and do better when it comes to the words we use. Is there a particular area of your life in which you struggle to control your tongue? How might you make better verbal choices when next that situation arises – or even before it arises? What are the advantages of listening more and choosing not to respond too quickly to banter?

Proverbs also teaches us that wise words start in the heart. Pastor Watson says, 'It's impossible to speak beautiful words from a foul heart, so make it your highest priority to make sure your heart is healthy before you expect your words to be.' How might dealing with your anger, bitterness, jealousy, or hatred change how you talk? Have you experienced this? Have you noticed how hurting people hurt people with their words?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

The New Testament is also liberally sprinkled with God's instructions for how we should use our words. James writes, 'And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself' (James 3:6). Read what Paul says about how we should talk, in Ephesians 4:29 and Colossians 4:6. If time allows, roleplay a couple of conversations where Paul's instructions are adhered to, and where they aren't.

In Matthew 12:34, Jesus explains that whatever is in your heart will determine what you say. Who is Jesus addressing in this passage? What lies were these people telling about Jesus, and how did this reveal what was really going on in their hearts?

Proverbs 10:19 says, 'When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.' This implies that we can and should take responsibility for what comes out of our mouths. Yet,

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without God's help, we're powerless. Read Psalm 141:3 and Galatians 5:22–23 and explain how David and Paul reiterate this truth.

LAST WORD

Our words are so much more powerful than we realize. They have a life of their own. They go ahead of us, and they live in the hearts of people long after we're gone. Let's take hold of every opportunity we have today to speak words that strengthen and uplift. The more we apply God's wisdom to our words, the more we begin to resemble Jesus, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1–5).

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Read Psalm 19:14 and Ephesians 5:4 in a few different Bible translations. If possible, read them out loud, prayerfully 'speaking them over' the probable conversations you'll have this week with people you like and people you don't.

Write: Write down the words you would love someone to say to you. Then think of the people whom you will most likely see today and write down the words you think they may long to hear from you.

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of patterns of speech that are unhelpful or hurtful to those around you. Allow His kindness to lead you to repentance. Pray for courage and self-control to use your words wisely.