

## Table Group Discussion Guide

**Series: Practical Wisdom | Title: "How Do I Use Words Well?" | July 26, 2026**

### **Start Here (5 minutes)**

1. What's something someone said to you — good or bad — that you still remember word for word years later? What made it stick?

### **Getting to Know Each Other (10 minutes)**

2. Are you an external processor (you don't know what you think until you start talking) or an internal one (you need to sit with it before you say anything)? How has that shaped the way people experience you — for better and for worse?

### **Getting Into the Word (25 minutes)**

Read together: **Proverbs 18:13, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 12:22, Proverbs 11:13, and Proverbs 16:24**

Jeff said the place to start with our speech isn't our mouth — it's our ears. Proverbs 18:13 says "to answer before listening, that is folly and shame." And then he asked the harder question: **which voices are you listening to?** Influencers who aren't experts. One documentary that made you an armchair expert. Cable news and clickbait designed to agitate you so you keep clicking.

3. Be honest — what are the loudest voices in your life right now? If someone looked at your feed, your podcast queue, and the people you talk to most, what would they say is forming the way you speak?

Jeff described three marks of a wise listener: they **assume they have something to learn**, they **welcome correction** even when it's hard to hear, and they **delay offense** long enough to find the grain of truth — even when the critique came clumsily or with bad motive.

4. Which of those three is hardest for you? Think of the last time someone gave you feedback you didn't want. How did you actually respond — and what would it have looked like to slow down instead?

Jeff named three reasons we lie: to **survive** (avoid a consequence), to **get ahead** (skip the hard work), and to **be liked** (the "yeah, I'll probably be there Friday" lie). And it offered the cross as the answer to each one: we lie to survive, but the cross says we die to live. We lie to get ahead, but suffering produces endurance. We lie to be liked, but God's word over us already settles that question.

5. Which of those three is your default? Where do you feel that pull most — at work, at home, with friends, online?

The sermon drew a line most of us have never heard clearly: **slander** is saying something untrue. **Gossip** is saying something that might be completely true — but saying it to people who don't need to hear it, or stripping out the context until it becomes false. And it named the Christian version: "*Joseph came to me for prayer the other day... he's going through a lot right now. Would you pray for him?*"

6. Has that distinction changed anything for you? Can you think of a time — maybe recently — when you shared something true with someone who didn't need to hear it? What was actually motivating you in that moment?

## Going Deeper with Each Other (15 minutes)

The sermon's one point: "*You cannot speak a life-giving word to someone else until you have heard the life-giving word spoken over you.*" The reason we struggle to encourage others isn't usually a technique problem. It's that we haven't slowed down long enough to hear what God says about us.

7. What word do you most need to hear spoken over you right now — healing, encouragement, empowerment, or correction? Say it out loud to the group if you're able.

Proverbs 16:24 says gracious words are "like honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." The sermon said words of life don't just change someone's day — they can change the direction of someone's life. They can move a person from insecurity to security, from destruction toward wisdom.

8. Who spoke a word over you that changed something in you — maybe years ago? Do they know what it did? **ACTION BONUS:** Tell them this week. A text, a call, a card. If they've passed away, tell the group instead.

Before you speak, the sermon offered a set of questions to run things through: Is my intention to harm? To prove I'm right? To bully? To sow fear? Am I building this person up or tearing them down?

9. Is there a conversation you've been rehearsing in your head — something you've been wanting to say to someone? Run it through those questions out loud with the group. What do you notice?

## Coming Back to Where You Started (5 minutes)

The sermon ended at the communion table: "The word God speaks over us is not condemnation, but a word of affirmation, a word of love, and a word of forgiveness."

10. Has anything shifted in how you're thinking about your words after this conversation? What's one thing you're taking away?

## Pray for Each Other (10 minutes)

On Sunday we spoke the words of communion over each other rather than hearing them from the front. Do something similar here. Go around the table and let each person share one specific thing they want prayer for — then pray for each person by name, out loud, before you leave.

If the group is ready for it, take a moment and let each person speak one word of genuine encouragement over the person sitting to their right. Not flattery — something you actually see in them. Then let that person simply say "thank you" and receive it without deflecting.

## One Thing to Carry Into the Week

The "**now what**" from the sermon, in three parts: Think before you speak. Stop before you press send. Slow down and cool down before you speak up. But remember — you'll only be able to do that if you've already heard a word over you that settles you. So this week, before you speak the hard thing, pause and ask: "*What has God already said about me that makes this less urgent to prove?*" Try it at least once before the group meets again. Come back and tell someone what happened.