

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Fool Proof
February 5, 2023

Fool Proof Words

Proverbs 13:14, Proverbs 18:21, Proverbs 10:19, Proverbs 18:7–8, Matthew 12:36–37

Proverbs 13:14: The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a person from the snares of death.

Proverbs 18:21: Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

Proverbs 10:19: When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

Proverbs 18:7-8: 7A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul. 8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

Matthew 12:36-37: 36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

C'mon, I love it! 11am we've got more coffee in us than the 9am. I like this. Hey, about eight years ago, I worked on a church staff. It was my first job out of college. And so, I was the middle school intern. They called us residents to make us feel a little better, but really we were interns. I'm this middle school guy on this really big church staff and one of my favorite memories was this staff retreat we went on. We ended up going to this camp and around that time of my life like camp was my favorite thing. It was essentially the only ministry I had done up until that point. And so just the idea of a retreat was exciting to me. And not to mention I was the middle school intern, which means I have very little responsibility. At camp I just get to play and hang out and be the hype man and even on the way there, they tell us, "Hey, why don't you grab some things that you can make a raft with, for once we get to the camp." And so I'm like, this is amazing. We're building thing. I'm an Eagle Scout (I know I don't look like one, but that's okay) and so we get to build things. We get there and we have this competition where we have to get across a freezing cold pool in this raft that we've built. And so I'm living the dream. Like this is amazing. You know, we're paddling and we're screaming and the Aggies have built their boats and they are sinking because they say they're engineers, and they're not. And they're in ministry. I love it. I love it. Here we go. And we're just having so much fun, whether we're playing sports or whether we're, you know, sinking in a pool. It was so much fun. But what was so amazing about that week, and really one of the highlights of that week, wasn't all the fun and the games

but it was this moment in the dining hall one night at dinner. I remember it like it was yesterday. Like I can tell you what the dining hall looked like. I remember the table we were at. I remember the seat I was sitting in. I'll never forget it. And one of the pastors comes up and sits next to me and I'm like, Hello, sir. You know, elder, sir, you know, I'm like, do you know my name? And we start talking. And he just starts to encourage me. He's like, "Hey, I just want you to know. I see that you're a leader. I see that you have potential and I just want to give you a word of encouragement. Like as you grow in leadership. I want you to just not get too intense. Because what's going to happen is you're going to get responsibility. And you're going to start leading, and you're going to become more and more intense. And so I just want to give you this word, hey, don't lose your youthfulness."

Don't lose my youthfulness. I didn't even know youthfulness was allowed in leadership. I didn't know that was a thing. You know, I'm just the middle school intern. He's speaking into my life. So I leave that moment and I like write it down. I'm like, okay, I cannot forget this. Do not lose my youthfulness as I grow as a leader. Do not lose this. It's this moment I'll never forget. It was a word that marked my life.

And I start with that this morning because that's what we're going to talk about. We're going to talk about words and how important they are. And it's so funny looking back like eight years ago, some random six-foot seven pastor that I think pastors a church in Waco now is the one that would take a moment to say something to a middle school intern. I'll never forget it. So we're going to talk about words because they're so powerful. That's what we're going to see. And we know this to be true. Just think about a moment in your life where somebody just said, "Hey, I see this in you". And it was encouraging, and it stuck with you and it had power. Do you think of something?

And then we know the flip side of the coin. Now that flip side of the coin is tough. And I can't even begin to imagine the things that have been said and how you want to not amount to anything. Harsh words, discouragement, comments about your appearance, maybe even wrongly timed critique. I truly. I can't imagine in a room this big, those in the commons, those listening online, words have power, and we know it. And we know it and I don't mean to make light but even some words that I won't forget that were negative but a little bit more light and playful. I remember just a few years ago, being at a church and I was about to speak. I was doing the mic check and I said "Hey, anything else? Can I help with anything else? Anything y'all need for me?" Then somebody just out of nowhere? Was like "Yeah, can you just make sure your head doesn't shine so much?" I was like, "Excuse me, I actually have no control over that. I don't know maybe there's some makeup I could buy and put on top, but I don't - I didn't know." I thought they were kidding. I was like bald joke, never heard one of those right. And then I realized they were being serious, and I was just like wow, okay. It just sticks with you.

And again, I don't mean to make light of real harsh things that have been said. But it all just goes to show us that the proverbs are true. Proverbs 18:21 tells us this, that, **18 Death and life are in the power of the tongue.** And if you've been tracking with us through the Bible reading plan you've probably noticed there are a lot of Proverbs about words. And so that's where we're going to be jumping around today is the book of Proverbs. As we continue in our series called Fool Proof. We're going to see what wisdom we can gain about words. Like what can we learn from the Proverbs about words so that we can live a fool proof life. And just like last week, we'll be

jumping around different proverbs. We're just looking at the Proverbs that talk about the subject of words specifically. And so that's unusual that we'd be jumping around, so you'll just have to really track with me as I kind of jump around this morning.

And so before we do, could we pray. Father, we do just come to you humbly. We ask that you would help us to focus. Would you just teach us more about who you are, and your design for our life? Lord, would you give us wisdom? Would you help us to use wise words that bring life? Would you use your word in these coming moments to just grow our affections for you and our obedience to you? And even for those in here that don't know you and don't love you, don't want to know you, Lord would you work in their lives in these moments? Would you soften their heart to your word, and would you work by the power of your spirit? Lord, we thank you for our friend, those friends being here, and listening. We thank you. We pray all this in your son Jesus' name. Amen.

Proverbs 10 is where we'll jump to first. Proverbs 10:19 says this, **19 When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.** So, if you talk a lot, sin is not lacking. Proverbs 17:28 (Some of you are laughing I love this. This is great). Proverbs 17:28: **28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.** That's funny too. And so the first thing we see when it comes to the Proverbs, when it comes to wisdom around words, is that silence can be wise. And we're not really meant to waste words. And so, our first point this morning from the Proverbs is don't waste words.

1. Don't Waste Words

In this week, as I was working through the Proverbs and this text, and I would even venture to say the last few months of my life. I feel like this is something God has been teaching me. Is that I waste way too many words. And the average person uses between 5,000 and 20,000 words a day, which to me, was a surprising like, that's a lot of words. And I just thought, man, I can't even remember of all the words I've used. Like, what did I say? Did I use them wisely? Like what did I talk about? And I think if we really took an inventory of our words in a day, or even just think about this last week, with me. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, like, what did our words revolve around? And how many of our words were wasted? And for me this week, I just, I think Waco and if you were here with us, or if you really were in Central Texas, like we got hit with an ice storm. And if you're not from around here, we know ice hits and everything shuts down and it's embarrassing, but it's fine. And we're used to it. Like it's a part of our lives, and we kind of enjoy it. So, it's like, ah, everything's shut down. That's good. But I think about this week how many words I wasted not around the logistics of the weather. I get it. To a certain extent we need to know is school closed is work closed, is that road closed. There's some logistics that makes sense. But think about how many words we wasted on our opinions about the weather. I can't believe they canceled school again. I drove all day yesterday, you know. Like, those are the things that I found myself saying and I think that'd be true of all of us.

There's so often we waste words and it's not just about the weather. I even found myself wanting to talk about the Baylor football schedule this week and how I don't like it, because we don't play OU and OSU and all these teams. And we have to play these new teams that are, I don't even like you know. They have been newly added to the Big 12. And some of you are like, "What is he

talking about?" I know. I know. It's wasted words. We waste words on so many different things. And James warns us in the scriptures like **James 1:19: Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.** It's just not something that marks our lives though. So many of us waste words. And I've really learned this in marriage more than anything. Like in marriage, I have learned it is not always smart to say what you're thinking. Some of you need to write that down. Especially the married people. You're like it is not always smart to say what you're thinking. It isn't always helpful to share your opinions or your thoughts. So often we waste words. Which is weird because if we start to speak less, when we do speak, people will lean in and be like "Wait, you haven't said anything yet. What were your thoughts on that? What do you have to say?"

And I think the best image for don't waste words that we can find comes from the scriptures. It comes from the book of James. It's talking about a horse being bridled with a bit and a bridle. And horses have so much strength. They're so powerful. They're like so fun to watch. You're like, "Wow, you're just this beautiful creature that God has created that has so much strength." And yet that strength is under the control of a bit and bridle and it gives direction. Despite the strength of that horse, it's under the control of another. And I think the same thing is with our words and with our tongues, we should not waste them. We should have them under the control of a bit and bridle. Under the control of the Spirit of God. Led by the Spirit, so that we wouldn't waste words. That's our first point this morning.

Let's keep reading in the Proverbs, starting in Proverbs 18: 7-8 says this: **7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul. 8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.** Proverbs 12:18 says: **18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts.** Proverbs 16:27-28 says: **27 A worthless man plots evil and his speech is like a scorching fire. Verse 28: 28 A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer (or a gossip) separates close friends.** You see, I want you to see that foolish words bring death and ruin to yourself. It brings death and ruin to others "sword thrusts". And it brings death and ruin, through gossip and separating everyone around us. Like foolish words, bring death.

2. Foolish Words Bring Death

That's our second point this morning. And it's weird to me that all of us have moments that are like man, I remember that negative thing that was said to me. And yet equally, we don't realize the power of our words. It's crazy that those two things are true of our lives. And so, I want us to see that that our words are so important and so powerful and I also want you to look back to Proverbs 18 verse eight it says the words of a whisperer or gossip are like delicious morsels. I want you to think back to a time where you've been gossiping. It goes like this, you go into a conversation like "Hey, Did y'all hear about this? Did y'all hear about that thing?" And it feels good. "Or did hear about that person?" It feels good to have information that other people don't have. It's like a delicious morsel, to go into a conversation and bring something to the table that other people can't talk about. "Oh, I didn't know that." Or maybe it's information that makes somebody else look less than you and you look better than. So it tastes and feels good. That's what gossip does. It feels good. My friends, just because it feels good, doesn't mean it is good. It

brings death. It separates close friends. And it says just before that, a fool's mouth is his ruin. It will ruin us.

And proverbs 12:18 says the one who's rash words are like sword thrusts. We know, as I've already said, just over and over again those moments that we will not forget. I remember when I was in high school, I played football. I know that might be a surprise looking at me. But I played football in my senior year. It was just this highlight peak moment. Just relive it with me. I'm in this game and I score the game winning touchdown. I'm like, "Amazing. This is my game, right? Like this is amazing". And then I went to a small private high school, so I played both sides of the ball. On defense, I got the game winning interception. It was amazing. People are going nuts. In fact, I caught the ball, ran off the sideline, was in front of all the students' section, all 300 of them, and was just like I have made it. Like this is it. Peak moment of life in high school. Like this is what it looks like to be at the top of the mountain. King, all the things. So, I get done with the game and I'm walking out and my dad comes up to me. And his first words are "Hey, why did you drop that pass in the second quarter?" I didn't respond. "And why did you get that penalty in the third quarter?" I don't know Dad, I don't know. And I love my dad and there's grace for my dad and truly God has worked in my dad and in our relationship in amazing ways over the last few years, but I will never forget that moment. Do you think words matter?

So, parents like let's just talk for a moment. It is an easy opportunity to just say hey, it matters far more how you perform at their game, during the game and after the game than it does how they performed during the game. I promise you their performance will not matter in 15 years. Your words, and your performance during and after a game, are going to be what matters. I'm 30 and I can still remember that game and those words.

Words matter and foolish words bring death and I really think Jesus warns us about this in Matthew 12. He says this in Matthew 12:36: **36 I tell you on the Day of Judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak.** But then he closes it with **37 For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned.** And so, I just want us to take a second and have a theological discussion. When he says on the Day of Judgment, you will be judged for every careless word. I just want you to know, theologically I don't fully understand what this means. Because what I do know is that I'm going to be judged one day and the only good I have is in Jesus. That's the only thing I bring to the table. I've fallen so short of God's glory. The only way that at Judgment Day I should be let in is because of what Jesus Christ has done for me. His blood and His forgiveness and His resurrection from the dead. It is all Jesus on that judgment day. But there seems to be something here where Jesus is saying, I tell you on the Day of Judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak. I don't fully understand how both those things are true. But I think Jesus is trying to warn us, saying be careful about the careless words that you speak.

Words are so important. They matter and foolish words bring death, and it reminds me of a hammer. Like when I think about words, I think about a hammer. You see words are like a hammer in the sense that they can build up. You know, this is me building (pretends to build). Can't you see? I'm building what else can you build? I don't know. I don't know how building looks. I'm like Nate. We're not very good at this. We're not very handy. So, a hammer can build up, but it takes time, right, to build something. Then a hammer can also be used for destruction very quickly, right like if I just would like (pretends to hit something). Oh snap. Does he not

know the power of this hammer? Some of you are arguing with me because it's a mallet. I know (laughs from the audience). It's fine. It's fine. Like we know the power of words. We know that words can destroy and we know that words can build up. And I just think we need to understand this and so often, as well, we're careless with our words. Like this hammer we're just careless and then we realize (hits podium). We don't realize even when we're careless, it can bring destruction. Words are like a hammer. They can build something up, or they can bring destruction, and even when we're careless, it can cause destruction. I'll put my mallet down because this thing's dangerous (audience laughs).

And so first we see don't waste words. Second, we see foolish words bring death. And let's see the last way that we can be wise with our words. There's more Proverbs than this, but let's just jump through a couple. Proverbs 13:14 says: **13 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life.** Proverbs 12:18: **18 The tongue of the wise brings healing.** Proverbs 12:25: **25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.** Proverbs 16:24: **24 Gracious words (or kind words) are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.** You see, wise words, they bring life. They are a fountain of life. They bring healing, they bring gladness. They're sweet to the soul and health to the body. That's our third point.

3. Wise Words Bring Life.

And so, wisdom isn't just old people that have white hair, or no hair, and look like Yoda or Gandalf, right? Wise words are the things that bring life. It's gracious words that bring sweetness and health, kindness. It's thoughtful words. Like things that have been thought through. You're following up with the person in front of you and you're remembering, "Hey, this is something we talked about. How is that going?" Pouring into people using words like, "I see this in you. I see this in you". Just like J P did to that random middle schooler, or excuse me I wasn't in middle school, I was a middle school intern. Just like that, it brings life. Those things bring life and so giving wise words is encouraging. It brings life. And I really think if we thought about this, we would realize, we as Christians ought to be the most encouraging people in the entire world. Like the fact that people don't talk about us as like, "Man, those are the most amazing people to be around. Every time I'm with them they ask me thoughtful questions. They care for me. They encourage me. They speak life into me. They pick me up when I'm down. They're clear with me. I don't wonder what they're thinking about me." I leave that work meeting and they say "Hey, you did a good job", or they say "Hey, I have some feedback", or "Here's some ways that you can grow in this and I'm so proud of you. Keep up the good work." They are clear and encouraging and insightful and thoughtful. And yet, I just don't know if that's the thing we're known for.

We should be the most encouraging people in the world. And this is my challenge to you this week. Like every day, once a day, just one time a day, encourage someone with your words. That's my challenge. Give life to someone with your words. And just for clarity, men, it doesn't count to be like you look like trash. Like that's not encouragement. Like we think giving somebody a hard time is encouragement. Men are confused in that way and I'm one of them. That's not encouragement. Just for clarity. Encourage someone and see how it brings life. See how it brings life.

I remember being at my wedding. Specifically I was at my rehearsal dinner, but really like every wedding weekend is the most encouraging thing and I as the groom was like, I didn't even know that people liked me this way. Like y'all are saying things about me, I didn't know you thought about me. You are giving me encouragement and giving me life and pouring into me. It's an amazing weekend. I was so grateful for it. And I think that's the way it is for like a lot of birthdays, or maybe retirements, or maybe weddings, and I would even say funerals. Like it seems like those are the places where people encourage. And really like that is something we are meant to do every single day. Use wise words that bring life.

And the last way that we can use our words and bring life is by sharing the gospel. It's by sharing the gospel. The greatest words you can use are the good news of what Jesus has done through His life, His death and His resurrection. Romans 10:14 says: **14 How are they to believe in whom they have never heard?** Our neighbors in the nations will not know Jesus unless we tell them about Jesus. That's the last way we can use our words to bring life, but let's go back to the words that bring death. Whether it be cursing, or gossip, or even lying, or not doing the things that you say you're going to do. What happens is we lose every opportunity to share the gospel. If our words are constantly bringing death, then you will lose the opportunity to give them life with the gospel. It will hurt your witness if you constantly use words that bring death. So wise words bring life.

So, in summary, don't waste words, foolish words bring death, and wise words bring life. And I want to close with just part of the application. I don't want you to just leave here and go change your behavior around words. Like I don't just want you to change your words. I actually think Jesus tells us in Matthew 12, just before the passage I read to you earlier it says, **for out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.** And so, in order for us to change our words, God has to change our hearts. Like that's the reality. So, we have to ask God for wisdom, and we have to seek God, so that as we see God, it will change our hearts, transform and renew our minds, and then therefore change our words. And I think about one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible is a little bit of this picture. It comes from Isaiah 6, if you want to read it later, I think it's an amazing passage to just read and underline and understand, but I'll give you a way too short summary of it. What Isaiah sees is he sees the Lord on His throne. And Isaiah's response is "Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips." When Isaiah sees Jesus, he realizes that his words and his lips and his heart is sinful. And so he repents, and then God forgives Isaiah. And what happens is Isaiah then says, "Hey, send me I'll go. Send me I'll go". I have fallen short of your glory with my words, but now that I've been forgiven, and now that I see how holy you are, God, how perfect you are, how majestic you are, how much greater you are than me. In light of that, and in light of your forgiveness, send me I'll go. I'll tell others about you. I'll bring life to others with my words. I'll serve you in whatever way, because you are that amazing. You're that beautiful. You're that pure. And that's what God does in us. As we see more of who He is, we're convicted, and we can't live up to that. And then He forgives us, and it changes us, and we change the way that we live. It changes our hearts and it changes our words, so that we could bring life. That we could have opportunities to tell people the good news of what He's done for us. Let me pray that we would be a people of wise words.

God, we do just ask that you would do this work in our hearts and in our lives. Transform and renew our hearts and our minds, so that our words can reflect you. So that our words can bring life. Lord, would you just forgive us for the ways that we've fallen short with our words, and that

they've brought death. Lord, would you just give us opportunities to encourage this week so that we can bring life to those around us. Whether it be at work or at home or be in between, Lord, would you just by the power of your Spirit would you give us that nudge this week each and everyday opportunities to encourage and bring life. And Lord I even pray for opportunities to share the gospel this week. The greatest words of life that we can ever share with somebody else. And Lord, lastly, we just thank you that this is all possible because of your grace and forgiveness that you've shown us through your son Jesus. Lord help us to look more like you. We love you. We pray all this in your son Jesus' name. Amen.