

3. Words We Hear

Proverbs 22:17-19 NLT - 17 Listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my instruction. 18 For it is good to keep these sayings in your heart and always ready on your lips. 19 I am teaching you today--yes, you--so you will trust in the LORD.

Lastly, we need to choose carefully what and who we listen to. You may hear words spoken to you, about you or over you. Only you control which of these you will listen to.

Proverbs 22 tells us to listen to the words of the wise, but not only to listen, we are to apply what is being said. How do we do that? One way is by keeping them in our heart and repeating them with our lips.

We know God's word is truth and brings life. How would you say you do at memorizing scripture? The more we have ready on our lips the better prepared we are for any situation. Try memorizing today's verse!

WRAP-UP

Our words really do matter. If we are wise, we can use them to speak life into others. But if we listen to the wrong voices in our lives we may allow a root of bitterness and hate to invade our hearts and the words we speak will bring destruction to others and ourselves. If we take James advice we will be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. Then our words will bring life and truth and glorify God.

MEMORY VERSE

The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense. - Proverbs 10:21 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

Challenge- As you are in conversations this week see if you can apply the Door of Discernment before you speak – is what you are saying necessary, adding value or encouraging?

“Words Matter” Wisdom #4

INTRODUCTION

We are entering Thanksgiving week and the conclusion of our series on the Wisdom of Proverbs. Your thoughts might be drifting towards the Thursday family feast about now. But what about the words you will be feasting on this week? Will they be nourishing you as much as that turkey will? Will they be words of gratitude, thankfulness and hope or words of hurt and bitterness? The book of Proverbs helps us to understand the power of our words and how to wisely use them.

Ice Breaker

If you could rewrite this expression, how would it end? “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words.....”

Key Passage

Proverbs 18:20 NLT - 20 Wise words satisfy like a good meal; the right words bring satisfaction.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Words Shape Us and Others

Proverbs 18:19-20 NLT - 19 An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars. 20 Wise words satisfy like a good meal; the right words bring satisfaction.

Without a doubt, the adage that ends with, “...but words will never hurt me.” was wishful thinking. Word can be powerful. They can shape us and others. Proverbs says that words can bring death or life and so we need to consider our words carefully.

Verse 19 in Proverbs 18 offers a picture of how difficult it is to repair a friendship destroyed by our words. Have you lost a friend due to something that was said? Was there an attempt to reconcile with them and did it succeed? If you could hit a rewind button, how would you have handled this situation differently?

Conversely wise words are as satisfying as that Thanksgiving meal we are headed for on Thursday.

Do you remember words of advice or encouragement that were especially powerful in your life? What were they and who spoke them?

Not everything spoken to us carries the same weight. What is it that gives a word greater power in our life? Who has been most impacted by your words? Is there someone you would like to inspire or encourage? If so you can use an ICNU (I see in you) conversation to let them know the good things you see in them.

2. Words We Speak

Proverbs 10:18-21 NLT - 18 Hiding hatred makes you a liar; slandering others makes you a fool. 19 Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut. 20 The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless. 21 The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.

Luke 6:45 NLT - 45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

Did you know the words we speak reflect our heart? Jesus taught this in Luke 6:45. Even when we attempt to hide how we feel, eventually our words will reveal our hearts. Godly words are incredibly valuable, and their influence is widespread, or as the proverb says like sterling silver encouraging many.

What kind of speech is produced when we have hatred or bitterness in our hearts (v. 18)? Proverbs says it is the fool who speaks this way.

In verse 21 it is the fool who is destroyed by hatred and bitterness in his heart. We should be a people of reconciliation who bring healing, but if we spread lies and slander, we are not only inflicting harm to others, but we are also on a path of self-destruction.

James 1:19-20 NLT - 19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20 Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

One of the ways we foster bitterness is when we indulge in too many words. (Prov 18:19) James gives us practical guidance to avoid falling into the trap of too many words. What are the steps he instructs us to observe? What are some of the places or sources you would list as provoking people to talk too much resulting in anger and ultimately sin?

We may deceive ourselves into thinking we are displaying “righteous anger” against sin or that we are defending God when we verbally attack His “enemies”. But James is clear, human anger doesn’t produce the righteousness that God desires. Not in us, nor in those on whom we unleash our anger. Rather, when we do speak, we should be bringing Godly words of encouragement reflectively, responsibly, honestly, purposefully.

In following the instructions of James, we can exercise wisdom by applying what is called the Doors of Discernment.

You can ask yourself these three questions before you speak:

- Is it necessary?
- Will it encourage?
- Does it add value?

Another way to test our words is to pause the T.H.I.N.K. Ask yourself is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind.

If what you are saying doesn’t pass the test you should probably refrain from saying it.