



MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 18:21

Plug In...

This proverb states a very bald fact: *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.* Several further proverbs in chapter 18 show that with the tongue justice or injustice takes place (v.5); with the tongue we can help people flourish (v.4) or begin to destroy them (vv. 8, 13-14, 19).

Chew It Over...

Have you realised words are that powerful? God invested human language with such power and now given the Fall that power has huge capacity to destroy people. This means every conversation has high stakes, every Facebook 'comment' matters, every tweet, text, email does something for good or bad in the life of the reader/hearer.

We need Jesus to forgive all our destructive words; we need the Holy Spirit to activate our hearts aright so that it overflows to mouths.

Prayer Suggestion

Help Lord. Help me to pray every day about my words. My heart's natural propensity is to be arrogant and my tongue is poised to say dumb and hurtful things. May the words of my mouth come from the deep waters of your fountain of wisdom.



TUESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 10:19

Plug In...

Several proverbs capture the reality that with much talk the probability of hurting, destroying, and sinning is radically increased. The follow-on proverb states again our sinful heart and mouth are inextricably intertwined (10:20). So we see many proverbs pairing the word 'heart' and 'tongue' together (examples: 16:23; 26:23, 24-26).

Chew It Over...

Whenever research has been done calculating how many words we speak per day, the statistic is an average between 10,000-15,000 words. One detail this type of research neglects to factor in is that each person from the sample has had sinful hearts powering those words. A creative exercise would be to capture the word count of only Christians. While not implying Christians no longer wrestle with a sinful heart, would the reality of the Holy Spirit's change mean the total words per day are different? Would that reflect a people who pause more before speaking? Would that then prompt researchers to probe as to why the discrepancy? Would it become apparent that this sample group understand that for every careless word uttered they will have to give an account for? (Matthew 12:36).

Prayer Suggestion

Fools rush in! Therefore, ask the Lord Jesus to wrangle your heart, to make us into people who slowdown, who consider carefully our next words. May we be people who offer words that build up, that give joy to the heart, that offer life, that even speak of eternal life. May our first words be words of pray about our words.



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 31:8-9 & 18:8

Plug In...

The proverbs have promoted embracing more silence than speaking, more pause and consideration, than excessive words. However, here a flip-side to being silent is presented. Being silent at the wrong time. There are people who for one reason or another cannot voice their concern, or appeal for justice, or defend an accusation. One must not be silent.

Chew It Over...

Do we speak up for the bullied? Further than thinking of the time you once did, ask yourself, do you do this constantly, on most occasions? If another person's character is maligned in front of you do you give them a voice given they are not there? Ray Ortlund Jr. says, "With every unkind word that goes unchallenged, a reputation dies".

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to unlock you from gossip and the group inclusion that drives it. Ask that God will help you wear the social loss by identifying with the bullied one.



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THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 13:14

Plug In...

Most of the proverbs remark about everyday rhythms. They observe the cause-and-effect that God has woven into the universe, both through creation and the curse. Therefore, most observations concern what can normally be expected within this life, within history. Occasionally, when describing these rhythms, the Sage (the proverb writer) will pick an image that lifts things out of the temporal (i.e., this life only) to the eternal (i.e., relevant to the life to come).

The image of the *fountain of life* echoes the language of the well-watered Garden of Eden where the Tree of Life was located and where God's presence emanated from. This image continues throughout the Bible. It is part of the temple imagery and then provocatively appears in the prophecies of the new temple in the new heavens and earth (see: Ezekiel 47, also Isaiah 65:22, *cf.* Revelation 22:1-5).

Chew It Over...

The wisdom of the gospel turns people away from death and judgement. Yet, despite this power, we are tempted to keep silent before even our friends as it appears foolish to them.

Think again of the wise instruction you have been given, and in the words of a nearby proverb (13:17) resolve to be a trustworthy envoy or courier of the message. Try listening in more intentionally this week to the dreams people have. Those around you are chasing an elixir and their words express it. Just be listening out for where you can talk about dreams, and share that path you've found to the fountain of life.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that you will not keep silent. May God remind us daily that the gospel is the power of salvation, it is instruction on where to find the fountain of life.



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FRIDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 16:28

Plug In...

Unhelpful words and negative speech is part of the eco-system around us. They zoom past us and depending on what is going on in a person's heart the listener can amplify the damage by simply giving time to listen. The implied inverse is that by interrupting to bring helpful and truthful words will result in keeping friends together.

Chew It Over...

Character assassination is happening all around us all the time. It is worth thinking how just the act of listening to gossip, lies, malicious talk amplifies the damage. Start to think through how you can spread healing in the lunchroom and the boardroom as this tone of conversation goes down. Think through how this should impact how we listen to people recount stories within a Growth Group context or one-to-one counselling.

This truth needs to reform even how we listen/read/watch the news and even pop-cultural news.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to change us from being passive with what we hear. May we learn how to respond thoughtfully to help heal relationships, to be a peacemaker.



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WEEKEND 01-02 OCTOBER 2016

SERIES: PROVERBS & OUR WORDS

Read: Proverbs 16:24 & Romans 10:15

Plug In...

“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Chew It Over...

Maybe all these proverbs about our words have weighed us down with guilt. You may be thinking, wow I've really stuffed-up my words, I have flung so many arrows, I've killed people's reputations, I've abused, I've lied. The proverbs do their job if they interrogate us and get us thinking that we need something radical to happen to our heart if we're ever to be any different. The proverbs also point forward because the wise person living in the fear of the LORD recognises that they, on their own, don't have the capacity to bring about that deep heart change.

How sweet it is, how gracious the words that announce you have been forgiven for every thoughtless, every intentionally harmful, every lying word ever uttered. How sweet to the soul to learn that the Holy Spirit is now deep within you, healing your very bones, your entire constitution. Jesus' words of forgiveness and promise are gracious words indeed.

Prayer Suggestion

You may choose to pray using Psalm 19 today.