

“Proverbs and Our Words”
Proverbs 12:18
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Key Ideas:

1. Proverbs has much to say about “words”

- a. Listen Carefully to Good Words: My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.” (Proverbs 4:20)
- b. Listen Cautiously to Enticing Words: “The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.” (Proverbs 26:22)
- c. Speak No Wicked Words: “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.” (Proverbs 4:24)
- d. Speak Only Good Words: “To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is! (Proverbs 15:23)
- e. Deal Wisely with Others with our Words: “The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.” (Proverbs 16:23)
- f. The Folly of Empty Words: “In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

2. Rash, Destructive Words Destroy (Proverbs 12:18a)

- a. “Rash” words do not simply have a connotation of how quickly they come off the tongue, but also a dimension of foolishness. Rash words are hasty, unwise, and destructive to others.
- b. Rash words are like sword thrusts, not a slap to the face that stings a bit, but a sword piercing the flesh. The author’s carefully chosen metaphor reveals the extreme destructive power that our words can have. A sword through your side is extremely painful, and may cause paralysis or even loss of life. The clear implication is that rash words are no small thing.
- c. Other Proverbs speak similarly about the destructive nature of words:
 - i. “...a harsh word **stirs up anger**.” (Proverbs 15:1)
 - ii. “A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it **breaks the spirit**.” (Proverbs 15:4)
 - iii. “...the mouth of the wicked **pours out evil things**.” (Proverbs 15:28)
 - iv. “A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a **scorching fire**.” (Proverbs 16:27)
 - v. “**Death** and life are in the power of the tongue.” (Proverbs 18:21)

3. **Wise, Constructive Words Heal (Proverbs 12:18b)**

- a. Whether it was wise counsel that helped you sort through a decision, or someone who was wise enough to simply grieve with you in a moment of loss, we have all experienced the healing that comes from a wise person's words.
- b. Other proverbs testify to the healing and encouraging effect of another's words:
 - i. "The lips of the righteous feed many..." (Proverbs 10:21)
 - ii. "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad." (Proverbs 12:25)
 - iii. "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." (Proverbs 16:24)
 - iv. "With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone." (Proverbs 25:15)

4. **How can we have God-honoring speech?**

- a. Christ has come and conquered Satan, sin and the grave. We can take hold of all of His amazing grace and power that he supplies through the gift of the Holy Spirit and grow in speaking words that bring healing.
 - i. Identify the sinful attitude that precedes your rash words. Enlist the help of God's Holy Spirit and your brothers and sisters.
 - ii. Flee to Christ for forgiveness.

*Shift your focus away from your sin and onto Christ; don't persist in looking upon sin; look upon Christ instead, and don't look away from him for a moment. When we see our guilt, if we don't see Christ in the scene, away with it! In all our storms of conscience, we must look at Christ exclusively and continually. (Thomas Wilcox, paraphrased by Jerry Bridges and Bob Bevington in *The Bookends of the Christian Life*)*
 - iii. Seek forgiveness from those you've spoken rash words to. Go to the ones you've sinned against and humble yourself.
 - iv. Walk by the Spirit. The Spirit of God was given that we might know Christ and obey him, that we might follow Him in his wise words. Pray daily for the Spirit to use you.

Fellowship Starters:

1. Consider those in your relational network; e.g., spouse, children, friends, co-workers, etc. Who can you specifically and intentionally encourage today and each day this week?

2. If someone recorded a week's worth of your words, what would they hear—words of praise, encouragement and faith? Or rash, selfish and angry words? Or both?
3. In Luke 6:45, Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart [the] mouth speaks.” What desires are waging war in your heart such that you speak rash words to people?
4. How should this Proverb inform the way you bring correction to a spouse, a child or a friend? How can you grow in bringing correction with gentleness and mercy (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26)?
5. If you have a pattern of using rash words, how can you find the joy of forgiveness in the cross of Christ and the hope for change in the power of the Holy Spirit? What brothers or sisters can you enlist to help you in this process of change?