



Watching Your Words

Key idea:

Words have powerful consequences for individuals and the whole community, so the wise person controls their tongue.

Key text:

Proverbs 12:18

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Key points:

1. Words have powerful consequences for the person speaking them, the person hearing them, and the community as a whole.
2. Proverbs speaks a lot about the consequences of our words (Proverbs 12:12:13-14; 12:18; 13:2-3; 14:3; 15:1-2; 15:4; 16:28; 17:20; 18:6-7; 18:20-21; 21:23).
3. The key to words bringing positive rather than negative results is controlling the tongue (Proverbs 10:19; 11:12; 12:18; 13:3; 15:23; 15:28; 17:27-28; 18:2; 21:23).
4. Proverbs lists at least eight key ways to control my tongue:
 - a. the total amount of words I speak (Proverbs 10:19; 17:27-28)
 - b. the topics on which I speak (Proverbs 15:2; 18:2)
 - c. the temper and tone of my words (Proverbs 15:1; 17:27)
 - d. taking time to consider my words (Proverbs 13:3; 15:28)
 - e. determining the best situation or “season” to speak (Proverbs 15:23)
 - f. speaking truthfully (Proverbs 12:19; 15:4; 17:20)
 - g. not participating in gossip (Proverbs 16:18; 18:8; 26:20)
 - h. speech that is generally characterized as pleasant and positive rather than quarrelsome and negative (Proverbs 10:21; 16:24; 17:19)

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Why does Proverbs have so many saying about the consequences of my words?
3. When Proverbs speaks of the power of my words, is it saying that my words have the power to alter and create reality as some teach today? If not, what does it mean when it refers to the power of my words?
4. In what way can my words affect me when I speak them? In what way can they affect the person to whom I speak them? In what way can they even have an effect on the community at large?
5. When I consider the strong nature of the consequences associated with my words (even life and death!), how seriously should I work to learn to control my tongue?
6. When I consider the eight ways of controlling my tongue listed in the key points, which do I need to work on the most? Which would I need to work on the second most? What practical steps can I take to grow in these areas? Pray and ask God to give you insight into these areas.
7. Can I think of particular relationships where my words are getting me in trouble? How can I use my words to change the nature of this relationship?
8. Can I make these changes in my life by my own power? If not, how can I draw upon the power of the Holy Spirit so that my words are a source of blessing to me and others rather than being a source of difficulty and pain?
9. Whom can I pray for, share what I have learned, and invite to church this week?

Preview of next week: Fruitful Friendships (Proverbs 13:20)