

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

## I. Intro - LifeHacks - Words

- A. LifeHacks - supposedly simple tips or tricks to make common tasks and everyday life easier
- B. All over internet & social media. Some really work; some are way more trouble than they are worth! (Toothpaste on headlight covers; Eyeliner with a spoon?)
- C. We are going to look to Proverbs for real life-changing wisdom that will help us live well now and prepare us for eternity
- D. We begin with words - an area most of us need help!
- E. How can words bring blessing rather than trouble?

## II. The Importance of Words

- A. Words have powerful consequences  
Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Prov. 12:18
  - 1. Words produce one of two powerful effects
  - 2. Words can cause great harm or bring healing
  - 3. This is a central theme in Proverbs  
From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied.  
<sup>21</sup> The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Pro. 18:20-21
    - a. Mouth, lips, tongue - all produce words
    - b. Fruit, harvest, fruit - the consequences of words
    - c. Life and death - a merism for everything

- d. Words have consequences that change life
  - e. See the list in the devotional/discussion guide for many more verses on the consequences of words.
- 4. This is not the idea of the magical power of words creating your own reality featured in prosperity circles. It is a recognition that words have consequences.
- B. Words have consequences for the speaker, the hearer, and the community at large
    - 1. They have consequences for the one speaking  
An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk, but a righteous man escapes trouble. Prov. 12:13  
  
A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them. Proverbs 14:3
      - a. Sinful foolish talk brings trouble; righteous, wise words protect from trouble
      - b. Our words can create or further trouble for us
      - c. Our words can reduce or eliminate trouble for us
    - 2. They have consequences for the hearer  
Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18  
  
The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. Proverbs 15:4
      - a. Pierce like a sword, crush the spirit of the hearer
      - b. Bring healing like a tree of life - for the hearer
      - c. Our words can encourage or discourage, lift the soul or crush the spirit, bring joy or spread grief. This is the power of our words.

3. Words bring health or harm to the whole community  
The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment. Proverbs 10:21

A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 16:28

- a. Words can nourish a whole community, or they can stir up dissension among many
- b. This is why gossip is so serious - it can penetrate and infect whole communities and destroy close friendships
- c. This is why the 9th commandment forbids lying about our neighbor - such sins affect the whole community

C. This is why we must control our tongues!

**Reckless** words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the **wise** brings healing. Prov. 12:18

1. Note the contrast of reckless and words of the wise
2. The word 'reckless' only used in Leviticus 5:4; Numbers 30:6,8; Psalm 106:33 - careless, rash, reckless
3. The reckless words of an uncontrolled tongue wreak destruction all around, while the carefully chosen words of wisdom can produce abundant blessing.
4. Wise words are like a scalpel in the hand of a surgeon excising sickness and bringing healing; foolish words are like a sword in the hands of a drunkard, slicing wildly and producing harm and death.

### III. LifeHack: Controlling My Tongue (Application)

A. Controlling the total amount of words I speak

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. Proverbs 10:19

Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. Proverbs 17:28

1. Too many words inevitably leads to sin, and sometimes silence is the wisest 'word'!
2. Our culture encourages everyone to emote and air their opinion on everything, but this usually the path of foolishness, not wisdom.
3. This is particularly a danger for extroverts!

B. Controlling the topics on which I speak

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions. Proverbs 18:2

1. Words are normally in conversation so that both people can learn
2. The fool does not want to grow in knowledge or wisdom, but simply to state their own opinion - even if they have no basis for it!
3. Our culture is full of this today. Any fool can state their opinion on social media, in a video, or a blog - and most fools are doing exactly that!
4. Example of a friend who states opinions on a host of topics every day - which only leads to trouble
5. Restricting the subjects on which we speak and are willing to argue will greatly reduce the likelihood of 'many words leading to sin'!

C. Controlling the temper and tone of my words

A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

A man of knowledge uses words with restraint,  
and a man of understanding is even-tempered.  
Proverbs 17:27

1. Restrained, gentle words cool down the conversation, but harsh, unrestrained words stir up anger and make the situation worse.
2. We often hear that voice warning us that we should not say that angry word - listen to that voice!
3. Example: learning to sit and speak quietly with children rather than standing over them and shouting (which amazingly only made things worse!)
4. Example of Max G. speaking to his kids

D. Taking time to consider my words

The heart of the righteous weighs its answers,  
but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil. Prov. 15:28

1. A wise person will take time to weigh their answer carefully, while a fool simply gushes forth their first emotional thoughts.
2. Very often taking the time to carefully consider what we really think and how to respond will allow us to speak in a much more productive manner.
3. Sometimes it is even helpful to get advice from someone on our reply to make sure the temper and tone will not make the situation worse

E. Determining the best situation or “season” to speak

A man finds joy in giving an apt reply —  
and how good is a timely word! Proverbs 15:23

1. We not only need to speak the right words (an apt reply), we need to speak them ‘in season’
2. Speaking the right word at the wrong time is usually pointless at best and it is often harmful.
3. Example: a couple with late night discussions that turned into verbal warfare
4. Example: Linda waiting until after dinner to bring up issues related to the kids that I needed to deal with

F. Controlling the content of my words - speaking truth

Truthful lips endure forever,  
but a lying tongue lasts only a moment. Prov. 12:19

1. We are called to speak the truth, not lies
2. We live in a world of spin, but those who live by spin will eventually die by spin!
3. We must try the best we can to verify the truthfulness of our words, and not pass on information until we do so
4. Example: friend on Facebook who said they don't have time to verify everything they are posting
5. We will never serve the cause of the Way, the Truth and the Life by passing on or speaking half-truths, distortions, or outright lies.
6. This also applies to speaking the truth of God's Word. It is not popular in our culture, but we dare not compromise or dilute the truth. This will never lead to blessing or clarity for us or others.

G. Controlling the content of our words - not participating in gossip

A perverse man stirs up dissension,  
and a gossip separates close friends. Proverbs 16:28  
The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;  
they go down to a man's inmost parts. Proverbs 18:8

Without wood a fire goes out;  
without gossip a quarrel dies down. Proverbs 26:20

1. Gossip underlies so much dissension, arguing, and trouble
2. But gossip seems so tasty that it is a temptation for all of us to listen and to pass on
3. But when gossip has been swallowed down it enters our blood and becomes part of us. It is virtually impossible to "unhear" or "take back" gossip.
4. We have made an industry out of gossip - National Enquirer; TMZ
5. The church can do this in prayer requests, backroom conversations, etc.
6. We should not engage in gossip, biting comments about people, etc.
7. Example: me at work with gossip about our team leader, and being convicted by the Holy Spirit

H. Controlling the content of our words - pleasant

Pleasant words are a honeycomb,  
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Pro. 16:24

He who loves a quarrel loves sin;  
he who builds a high gate invites destruction. Pr. 17:19

1. Our tone should generally be positive and pleasant, not negative, biting, sarcastic, or demeaning

2. We live in a world that increasingly loves negative, sarcastic, biting words that are anything but pleasant and lead to quarrels. They are more like vinegar than honey.
3. This does not mean we never speak hard words of truth that may be "negative" but that should be a distinct minority of our speech.
4. The overall tone and content of our speech should be positive rather than negative, pleasant not controversial, building up rather than tearing down, encouraging rather than discouraging, working toward unity rather than stirring up controversy and quarrels.
5. Family - "I love you"; blessing children; praising; verbally thanking/appreciating

## IV. Applying the Word

A. Where am I not controlling my tongue?

1. Controlling the total amount of words
2. Controlling the topics on which we speak
3. Controlling the temper and tone of our words
4. Controlling when we reply
5. Controlling the timeliness of our words
6. Controlling the content of our words - truth
7. Controlling the content of our words - gossip
8. Controlling the content of our words - pleasant

## B. Word and Table

1. Having heard the Law, we now hear the Gospel!
2. The Word became flesh because our words and actions were so flawed and broken
3. Today He speaks Good News to those whose tongues have betrayed them, and whose lives have failed them!
4. Hear His Word of invitation, give your word of confession, receive His Word of forgiveness and blessing!

### Watching Your Words

Proverbs 12:18

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Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Tongue and words; wisdom and knowledge; community; character; blessing; honesty and integrity; anger

The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

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but the tongue of the wise brings healing.  
Proverbs 12:18