

Proverbs 10

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're in the book of Proverbs on Sunday night, and we've got a section where we're going to look at different topics. 1-8 Proverbs is pretty much a pattern, and you can look! at it consistently, passage to passage, but I do think once you get to Proverbs 9, I don't think that's possible, and I think the best way that you can look at it is by looking at it through topics. If you want some commentaries, Derek Kidner, who is worth, I don't agree with him on everything in Proverbs, but he's worth a Tyndale commentary. He was built for Twitter, really, in that he's kind of 20 really quotable. And if you want a big beast, get Bruce Waltke's commentary, but it's very expensive. You can get it on Kindle, I would have thought.

So tonight, I want us to look at words. One of them, you remember this. You let your dad down. I hope you know that. You let your dad down. I hope you know that. Those are the words that you've been posted on Twitter during the 2012 Olympics to a 17-year-old boy in Weymouth.

They were directed at Tom Daley, you know the British diver in Team GB. He'd just come fourth in the synchronised diving competition. Tom Daley's dad, you probably know it, he'd been his coach, and his biggest inspiration. He died of brain cancer the previous year. You let your dad down. I hope you know that. It's a great example, isn't it? It's a great example of the power of the tongue. The tongue has got the power of life and the power of death. And those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs tells us what we know is already true. Proverbs tells us that words can make you or break you. They can give you life, or they can take away your life. Tom Daley's Twitter attack is pretty normal, isn't it, the nonsense which goes out online. But you could pick out many, many things, couldn't you? Things from this last week's news, things that people have said to you. So I was at a preaching conference this week, and there was an Australian preacher who was brought in to give sermon feedback to us. And it was a great experience. And he said, I'm not going to talk about the passage. I'm going to talk about how bad most English and British preachers are as communicators. So my friend preached in a slightly nervous manner, and the Australian said to him, the first word were, boring, boring, boring, brother. And then his comment was, you've got to grow the mangrove. Well, none of us knew what growing the mangrove was, but we found out it means you've got to get more aggressive. He said to me, brother, you drive on a hundred miles per hour. But it was great comments, memorable comments, short, pithy comments, words that are important, that you take away.

I wonder what somebody said to you this week, that you remember. Listen to this. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him, through God's Word, all things were made. Without him, nothing was made that has been made. By his own Word, Jesus, God made everything. With his own words, God created and called the universe into existence.

[3 : 5 3] And so God has made a world in which words are everything. Words are either the worst of people or the best of blessings. The tongue, our mouths, our words, are so important. So this is the first series of thematic studies in Proverbs. And this evening is very simple, and I hope an enjoyable look at this look at things we do with our words. We're going to look at the power of words, the folly of words, the wisdom of words, and the end of our words. So let's have a look.

The power of words. Our words are work. They are powerful. Now all words are workers. Little means to certain ends. Words do things. Words change things. Words alter things. They are like tools. They are like instruments. Look at why our words are powerful. First of all, they affect others. We've got our own wonderful Proverbs about it, haven't we?

Loose lips sink ships. The Bible Proverbs makes pretty much the same point. An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. And just as a gentle answer can turn away wrath. So a hard word stirs up. Proverbs 12, 25. Just listen to some of the verbs for how words

affect others. The words we speak conceal, conceal, store up, lift up, invite, cheer, crush, stir, spread, nourish, pierce, heal, endure, snare, satisfy, rebuke, harm, wound.

Hit, shoot, lie, flatter, brag, insult, divide, and slander. Now just think for a moment. Think of the massive ways people who receive any of these things are affected. To be hit. To be battered by words. Children sit with Play-Doh, not right? And with their fingers, they mould Play-Doh into different shapes and forms. And then they get their little kind of plastic scalpel out and they cut Play-Doh. And they press it into a mould and something new is born.

And we do that to each other with our words. If you can visualise everyone in this room as a big lump of Play-Doh, it's probably not that difficult. And all the time you are being pressed and pulled and shapen or misshapen. Not because we're sticking our fingers into each other, but because we send our words into each other. Because of the penetrating power of words.

[6:46] Somebody is in better shape because of something someone said. Or somebody is in worse shape because of something someone said or forgot to say. A woman in Los Angeles took her own life and all she wrote in her string of side note was this. They said. They said. That's all that was written on the note. Words are powerful. But with our words we affect ourselves too. Look at chapter 18 and verses 20 to 21. Look at chapter 18 and verses 20 to 21. It says this. Chapter 18 verses 20 to 21. From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied.

He is satisfied. He is satisfied by the yield of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruits. Here's the beautiful power of Proverbs.

For the point it's making is expressed in imagery. We all have to eat our words all of the time. What we say produces consequences. Speak to your wife or your husband or your children. Speak to them in a certain way and you will reap a harvest from your words. Either reap the whirlwind or choice delight.

Do you see what 18 verse 21 is saying? Learn to love your tongue. Learn to love your powerful tongue. Grow to love what you can do with your mouth. Because with your tongue you can create a rich harvest for you to enjoy. Whatever anyone has ever told you in life. What you can and can't do and what you're not good at. Proverbs tells you that with your tongue you are able to do the most amazing things. Your tongue can make or break someone else. So learn to love that power and use it because you yourself are wrapped up in the consequences of that making or breaking. Use your speech of course to make not break and to give life not kill. Some of you have been to Africa. I've been to Africa three times. One of the things I love about in Africa, those of you who have been there, is the fruit in Africa, isn't it? Isn't the fruit in Africa something incredible? It is brighter. It is bigger. It is juicier. And there's more variety.

Think of that stall in Greenfoot by the side of the road on steroids. Alright? The most glorious fruit. Now where does it come from? Where does the fruit in Africa come from? It comes from the climate. It comes from the sun. It gives birth to delicious fruit. Where the healthy homes and laughing hearts and grateful children and happy marriages come from? They come from our words. Our words are powerful because they affect ourselves, they affect others and they affect God. Here's the thing. All our words have moral status. There are no neutral words.

[10:01] Everything we say, everything you say is either true or false, good or evil, kind or harsh. And all of it, every single word we say is known and it is heard by God. It's interesting that on that list that you've got on the sheet, but also in chapter 6 and verse 16 to 19, three or four of the things that God detests are all to do with words, aren't they? Lying, in chapter 16 to 19, lying, being a false witness, stirring up conflict. And the reason is because God himself is a speaking God. And in God there are no moral sheets of gray. There's no self-interest or deceit or flattery or vain glory so that when God speaks and sends his son to be his word he only ever speaks truth. And any words we speak which are not the kind of words that he speaks arouses his hatred. Our words affect God.

Jesus says this, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not do such and such? And I will say to them, depart from me.

And one more thing to notice about the power of our words, they affect ourselves, they affect others, they affect God. Secondly, lastly, they reveal our hearts. Lastly, on this point, they reveal our hearts.

This means that our words have the power to be like a window into our souls. Our words shine a light on what is going on beneath the surface.

You go to the doctor. He doesn't say anything. What did the doctor used to say when you were a child? When you went to the doctor. What did he used to say? Do you remember? What did he used to ask you to do? Yeah, say that.

[12:05] Put your tongue out. Put your tongue out, doesn't it? Ridiculous. And supposedly the doctor could tell what's wrong with you by putting your tongue out, doesn't it? You don't do that anymore.

Because he could say, put your tongue out and I could see what's going on. Well, Solomon says this, let me hear you speak. Put your tongue out. And then I'll know what's what.

Now, the proverb shows us this very, very carefully. Look at chapter 15 and verse 7. And you'll notice that kind of parallel structure of the proverb.

Parallel of it. The lips of the wise spread knowledge. Notice how lips and heart are the two equivalent terms in the balancing of that proverb.

The lips of the wise spread knowledge. And instead of saying not so, the lips are fools. It simply identifies lips with the heart.

[13:19] As you are in here. So you will be out there. Jesus said to me, out of the overflow of a person's heart, they speak.

You see, what's in here cannot be kept in here. It really cannot. A big heart. And you'll hear patient words.

A bruised heart. And you'll hear hurting and hurtful words. An empty heart. And you will hear loud and hollow words. A wise heart. And you will hear knowledge. Here's a wonderful way to picture it. It's an image, but it isn't my own. Your tongue is the hinge on which the door of your heart swings. Don't ever think.

Don't ever think that you've got the real you inside you. Somehow being kept invisible. And separate from all the words you're speaking to others around you.

[14:23] If only you could see the real me. The truth of Proverbs is who you are as a person is much more visible to others than we may realise.

And all because of the kind of words we speak. So look at the power of your words. I wonder whether you've ever thought like this. I've not really thought like this.

Do you ever consciously and deliberately set your words to work? Sending them off into the world and into someone else's life to do them good. Solomon is picturing for us a world of people who because they belong to a speaking God, they are intentional speakers.

Forever hungry to eat the food of their own words that they've created. Stop and think about it sometime. When was the last time you built something with your words? Think about it within the context of a marriage.

Or a family. Or your business. Or you tried to change something with your speech. Or you harvested something because of words you deliberately sowed a long time before.

[15:33] I think we harvest our words all the time. Probably way more than we realise. And so Proverbs says, don't just let it happen to you. As if you have absolutely no control of it.

Plant your words somewhere and watch how powerful they are. And if we believe this. If we believe that our words are powerful. Then it helps us to see the damage we can do with our words that are worst.

Our words that are worst. And the good that we can do when our words are at their best. I put down on that bit of paper. That you should have with all those lists there.

A kind of anatomy of foolish words and wise words. The kind of what you see. These kind of lists of different words. But I hope as we go through Proverbs.

As you read Proverbs. Please do read it. You're going to find that one in every six verses is about our words. One in six verses is about our words. Never trust those kind of statistics that people do on the Bible.

[16:38] But trust this one. Alright. One in every six verses is about our words. Over 150 of them. Let me just take a brief sample of what you'll find. Proverbs is about lies. And deceit.

Proverbs 25 verse 18. A man who bears false witness against his neighbour.

Is like a war club. Or a sword. Or a sharp arrow. I don't know about you.

But I can think of people I've seen cut in two. Because of lies told about them. I can think of reputations destroyed. Of careers that have been ended.

Of marriages that have been traumatised. Because of untruthful word. Can you see why the imagery of weaponry is so apt to words and to lies? Because words have got the power to bind. [17:39] And stick. And heal. And unite. And glue. Or they have the power to rent. And tear. And pierce. And divide. It's like an axe. It's like an axe parting a limb from a body.

Or a sword parting flesh from the bone. And no words have the power to divide like lying words. And that is why the strength of language is used for how God feels about lying words. Look at chapter 6 verse 19. He detests it. Because 6 verse 19. False witnesses pour out lies. They breathe out lies.

And it can lead to conflict in the community. Lies destroy togetherness. They destroy relationships fundamentally. Because they remove the basis of trust between people.

Which allows them to live in harmony. So when a man and a wife say I do. And I will. They create don't they? A bond of trust. And a lie destroys that trust.

[18:38] It tears it in two. True words make love and trust and intimacy possible. But false words conceal us from one another. Even though we might go on faking community.

And when all of that happens. What we are doing is becoming isolated individuals. Building our own little kingdoms of self. Instead of being together in Christ's kingdom. All of these foolish words. Lies and deceit. Words which divide and quarrel. And slander and insult. Words of gossip and rumour. And flattery and bragging. They are words in the service of self.

Chapter 26 and verse 23. 26 and 23. Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel. Our fervent lips. With an evil heart. 26-28. A lying town hates its victims. Have you ever thought.

[19:37] If you lie to someone. You are hating them. That's why it's the children. That is why your parents will not allow you to lie. Do you want to listen to me for a minute children?

Have a look up. That is why. Your mums and dads will not allow you to lie. Because if you lie to someone. You are hating them.

No, no. You say. I don't hate them. What's my shading of the truth. Got to do with how I feel about them. You hate them. Because you are saying words to them.

Which manipulate a situation. To make yourself look good. And you are caring more about how you look. Than where that person is. Because of what you said. When we lie.

We put ourselves first. And others last. And Solomon says. Not only is what we are doing hurtful. It is hateful. And we see the idea of a kingdom of self.

[20:32] So clearly. In chapter 18. Verse 19. It's easy to argue like that. Isn't it? You become this impregnable fortress.

This strong city. So convinced that you are right. And your wife is wrong. This kind of proverbs. Doesn't come down on one side or the other. Does it?

In terms of who is right or wrong here. It's simply saying. Watch out. A clash of words. Can lead to a clash of kingdoms. And sometimes. It's very hard to call a truce. Isn't it?

Qualls disrupt relationships. Slanders and insult. Destroy relationships. Look at gossip and rumours. Look at chapter 18. Verse 8. The words of a whisperer.

Are like delicious morsels. They go down into the inner parts of the body. Isn't that a body blow? You know that delicious tip bit of news.

[21:36] I've been at a ministers conference this week. That is the great place where ministers struggle with this verse. That bit of news.

And I'll just keep under my tongue for later. Being in the know. Being in the scoop. If you think churches are removed from that sort of thing.

Well you don't know churches. Being in the know about something you don't really need to know. Or which gives you power. Now that kind of feeling. There's a delight in that kind of feeling.

That's what this proverb is saying. But it will lead to a kind of deep satisfaction in the bones. That you have an inside track. Gossip is this.

It is inappropriate reports. Given to inappropriate people. At inappropriate times. It's a good definition. Inappropriate reports. Given to inappropriate people. At inappropriate times. What is being said.

[22:33] May be actually true. In fact it usually is. Because we know it's true. We want to share it. Or we want to receive it. It's rumours. A negative report.

About other people. Based on uncertain evidence. And each and every time. The words which leave our mouths. They are further bricks. In the kingdom of self. In the walls of self.

What has been really interesting to me. As I study prophets. Is that Solomon says. That speaking lies.

Or spreading gossip. Is actually only half the problem. It's only half the problem. Listening to it. And absorbing it.

In without comment. That is a moral issue too. Go to chapter 17. In verse 4. An evil doer listens.

[23 : 32] To wicked lips. And a liar gives ear. To a mistress tongue. Somebody has put it like this.

Perhaps you don't have a problem. With gossip yourself. But perhaps you have. That peculiar kind of. Welcoming face. That attracts gossip to you. Perhaps you don't have a problem.

With gossip yourself. Perhaps you have a peculiar. Kind of welcoming face. That is so. Attracts gossip. To you. 17 verse 4. Is such a striking verse.

That if speaking. Can be an evil act. Then listening. Can be an evil act. To an act of wrongdoing.

And if you pay close attention. To slander. It makes you a liar too. Here's the one thing.

Here's the thing. One gossip. One gossip. Can never destroy a church. One person. With a loose tongue. And poor insight. Can never harm a church.

[24 : 34] On their own. Never. What they are saying. Might be. Downright inappropriate. And wrong. And dangerous. But on their own. They are harmless. For what damage.

Can they do. Unless someone listens. No. It takes two to tango. It takes a receptive year. In the coffee shop. Or the end of the phone. For the damage to begin.

So there's always. An alternative. Isn't it? I hear what you're saying. Yeah. I know what you're saying. Let's go together. And speak to the person concerned. Well.

Flattering. Bragging too. In both of them. What we're doing. Is caressing. Our reputation. In somebody else's mind.

Me. Look at me. Me. Me. Me. Please. Well. If those are examples. Of words. That are foolish words. And you feel terrible. As I do. About it. Here are words. That are wise best. Here are some standards.

[25 : 29] To hold ourselves to. As a church family. In our homes. And in our families. At work. In every single area. Here are the ways. Of woman wisdom. And the words she speaks. So let's make our words.

As a church family. True. What we should say. Should always conform. To the way things really are. And probably. Shows us the beauty of this. This. By making us feel it.

Look at 24. 26. Whoever gives an honest answer. Kisses their lips. Do you see the image? Is it beautiful?

Truthful words between two people. Is compared to intimacy between two people. Isn't it? You don't go around. Kissing lots of people on the lips. Do you? I hope not.

Intimacy between two people. Relationship is maintained. Community is built. People are kept together. And whole. And are won. By truthful words.

[26 : 25] Because when we speak truthful words. What we're saying to each other. Is that there's something. Outside of us. Which matters more than us. Isn't that right? I'm not building my own version of reality.

Which you have to conform to. No. God has told me what is right and wrong. And his version of the reality is right. And everything I will say will line up with that. His account.

Not mine. Is what matters. And truth will always. Always stand the test of time. At 12.19. Truthful lips endure forever. So.

Let's make our words few. I've told that the children. The raised kids will tell me. That kids still watch the Simpsons. That I don't advise you do.

But Lisa Simpson and the Simpsons. Has understood this. When she said this. Better to keep silent. And be thought a fool. Than to open your mouth. And remove all doubt. But there is actually a version of that.

[27 : 25] In Proverbs. Isn't there? Proverbs 17.28. Even a fool who keeps silence. Is considered wise. When he closes his lips.

He is deemed intelligent. The reason wisdom and discernment. Are often attached to few words. Is because sin. Is usually attached. To many words.

Chapter 10. Verse 19. When words are many. Transgression is not lacking. It is possible to hurt people.

In silence. With silence. Isn't it? Those of you who are married. Know that. It is possible to hurt people. In silence. It is very possible. But I think you will agree. That it is much more rare. Than hurting people with speech.

I think so. To answer. Before listening. Is folly. And shame. You've got one mouth.

[28 : 22] And two ears. What do you think you're meant to use the most? Well let's make our words truthful. Let's make our words feel.

Let's make our words act. Appropriate. And fitting. This is verse isn't it? If your lips were to keep from slicks. Five things observe with care.

To whom you speak. Of whom you speak. And how. And when. And where. Appropriate words are soothing words. They're like the tree of life. Gracious words are like honey from the honeycomb. And gentle words will turn away wrath. But at the same time. True words that speak. Are not always easy words to hear. Getting it just right.

With words. Is a beautiful experience. Experience. When what is said. Comes out right. And when people hear it in the right way. And receive it in the right way. There is a unanimous chorus of approval. Well. Like apples of gold.

[29 : 19] And settings of silver. But also. Sometimes getting it right. With words. Will cut. Just like a sword. Friends.

Can wound. An open rebuke. Is better than hidden love. In other words. A rebuke. May be perfectly apt. And we need to face up to that.

As a church. Don't we? But I want to end. With this. The right use of words. Is a skill for living well.

So how do you get it? How do you get it?

Tie a knot in your handkerchief. You know. Have that swear box in work. Where does it come from?

Let me try and end with this. Never try to fix your words.

By mending your mouth. Never fix your words. By mending your mouth. Instead change your heart. The tongue is the hinge.

[30 : 18] On which the door of your heart turns. So open tonight. Your heart to God. And when you open your mouth. Everything will be okay. A heart that is right before God.

Is what creates the mouth of the righteous. And leads to the words of the wise. Many scholars look at these different Proverbs. In chapter 10 onwards.

And they think. What on earth is the thematic connection. Between them all? The Proverbs in chapter 11. What is it that holds that? And the chapter 13 together.

Where is the unity between them all? Well here is what I think. There is one thing which finds all the Proverbs together. So that in a sense. Every single Proverb. Is an expression of this one thing.

Well you know it. Don't you? What is it? The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of wisdom. But fools despise wisdom and discipline. When you begin to fear the Lord.

[31 : 15] Well then everything. Every Proverb in the book. Flows from that knee height posture. That you have adopted before God. When you fear the Lord. Then you will stop winking maliciously.

Or concealing violence. Or stirring up conflict. Or listening to gossip. And instead you start nourishing others. And holding your tongue. And giving answers. All of that.

Every single bit of that. Flows. From bowing before the Lord Jesus Christ. And realising that Jesus Christ is in charge. And you are not. Because what happens.

Is that you come to realise. That his words matter more than yours. Look at chapter 2 verse 5 and 6. Which is so encouraging. Proverbs chapter 2 verse 5 and 6.

Then you will understand the fear of the Lord. And find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom. From his mouth. Come knowledge and understanding. Here is why Proverbs is always.

[32 : 17] Always a world. A world of grace to us. All of us this evening. Are the owners of words. Which we have let loose in the world. And let in the lives of others. And we all own words.

That we are proud of. And we would say again if we could. And we all have our names attached to words. We would give anything to take back. Wouldn't we? And your proverb says to us.

Just look. God's words to us. Matter more than anything. There are no words. Which can ever come from your mouth. Which cannot be conquered. By words from his mouth. There is nothing you have said.

Which cannot be forgiven. And wiped clean. In God's sight. Even if here on earth. The consequences remain. There is nothing that someone else has said to you. Which God is unwilling to forgive them.

Having said to you. And so the door in our hearts. Must always stay open for forgiveness. All of this comes from seeing yourself. And the world.

[33 : 16] And your words. In the light of God's words. The humility of your heart. Or the independence. And self-reliance of your heart. Is always.

Always the fountain for your words. And there is only one place. There is only one place. Where we can ever change that fountain.

On our knees before God. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of wisdom. And the knowledge of the Holy One. Is understanding.

Let's pray.