



PROVERBS: The Healing Power of Positive Words

This week's Scriptures – Proverbs 12; Proverbs 16; Proverbs 18.

Amplified Texts: Proverbs 12:18, 16:24, 18:21

(Adapted from: Week_7_Solomon_1233869392_1235400227.doc)

Devotion for 12 – 17 October 2020

Purpose - To explore several of Solomon's proverbs related to wise speech.

The first 17 books of the Old Testament (Genesis – Esther) are fairly chronological in their order. But the next 5 books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) are placed together because of their poetic nature. These are the 5 books of poetry. Much of this material, such as psalms written by David and proverbs penned by Solomon, give additional insight into Biblical characters whose lives were

described earlier in your Bible reading. It is believed that the book of Proverbs was compiled by Solomon, son of King David. One writer described a proverb as “The wisdom of many but the wit of one.” The Proverbs instruct us on how to live wisely, with skill, avoiding needless pitfalls.

Words have power, and proper use of that power requires wisdom. This week's devotion explores the positive uses of the power of speech, and gives direction for exercising wisdom in what we say.

Question: How can my words bring healing to hurting people?

1. Control your impulses and speak wisely Proverbs 12:18
2. Conquer your bitterness and speak kindly Proverbs 15:4
3. Correct your attitude and speak positively Proverbs 16:24

Prayer: Lord, I know my tongue often gets ahead of my mind and heart. I am quick to speak and I repent of the many thoughtless things I have spoken. I am sorry for words I have spoken in anger or in gossip. Please help me to see when I am about to speak without thinking and to check my heart. Help me be slow to speak. Help me Lord to be a person full of loving words, full of your Spirit, overflowing with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. Amen.

Many of us remember a rhyme from our grade school playground: “Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me.” We all probably know that this rhyme is not entirely true. Words have the power to do great harm and great good. In the words of Solomon: “The power of life and death is in the tongue.” (Proverbs 18:21)

If you think Solomon is overstating things, just think back on your own life for a moment. Can you recall any words that were said to you, or about you, that brought about a death of some sort – the death of a dream, the death of a relationship, the death of your self-image? How about words like, “You're just average,” or “You can't do anything right,” or “It's all your fault,” or “You're ugly,” or “You're a loser,” or “You're thoughtless.”

Now, think back again, and this time, can you recall any words spoken to you or about you that brought you to life – gave you hope for your future, excitement about your purpose, or made you feel good about yourself? How about words like, “I believe in you,” or “You've got what it takes,” or “You are so talented,” or “You're a winner.”

Today, we're going to turn the tables. Instead of analyzing the cruel words that were said to you as a young person and how they have affected you as an adult, we're going to take a look at the power your words have in the lives of others. Funny, isn't it, that we can be so bent out of shape about the things people say to us, without ever giving much thought to

the impact that our words have on them!

Well, your words do have impact. In fact, you are probably far more influential in people's lives than you realize. How can you harness that force and make sure you're speaking the "power of life" into people, and not the "power of death"? What can you do to become the kind of person that people stop to listen to every time they open their mouths to speak? Remember the old ad slogan, "When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen"? Let's discover what Solomon has to say to us in Proverbs that can transform us into that kind of person – "When _____ talks, people listen."

Prayer: Father, in the Name of Jesus, I thank You that You have given me power in Your Name to overcome any hardship, and to increase in every area of my life through the simple act of speaking right words—words that line up with Your Word. Lord, I believe that my words are containers that carry my faith and accomplish in the natural realm everything You have promised. I ask You to help me be mindful of each and every word I speak. Father, help me to eliminate all idle words in my life and only speak those things that I desire to come to pass. Father, when the temptation comes to speak against Your Word, I pray that You will help me put a guard over my mouth and stop before any wrong word is spoken. I ask You to give me wisdom and insight into which words You would have me speak, and then fill me with the boldness to speak those words continually and without doubt. I thank You, in Jesus' Name, that Your Word does not return void; and therefore, my words spoken in line with Your Word will never fail to accomplish what they set out to do. Thank You for empowering me with right words, and I thank You for the end result—victory in my life! In Jesus' Name. Amen.

From the beginning of time, God has asked us to step out on faith and trust Him. The writer of Hebrews put it this way: *Without faith, it is impossible to please God.* The journey of faith requires us to trust God in life's daily activities such as those touched upon in the book of Proverbs – even as simple or seemingly minor as the words we say. Proverbs provides direction in living life with wisdom and skill. It is God's wisdom we explore in Proverbs, and it will take faith to implement that wisdom at times, especially when you'd rather use your words to spout off or say what you feel or retaliate or defend yourself.

How can my words bring healing to hurting people? Control your impulses and speak wisely Proverbs 12:18, *Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.* In this proverb Solomon dramatically portrays how powerful our speech is. Reckless words are not something to be taken lightly – they have the power to wound as fiercely as a sword can!

What are reckless words? These are the words you say without thinking, impulsive words that aren't checked by self-control. You're especially likely to speak recklessly when your defenses are at their lowest, such as when you're tired, stressed, irritated, frustrated, feeling put out, feeling used, or feeling ill. Reckless words could be spoken by a mom dad, friend, or teacher; reckless words wound a person's spirit.

What are healing words? These words are like a roll of gauze bandages. Healing words, according to this proverb, are wise words. These are words that are carefully chosen for the need of the person hearing them. Wise words are usually not spoken in haste or out of an emotional reaction, but words that reflect God's perspective on the situation.

Why is it so important to exercise self-control over our words and keep from speaking recklessly? James 1:26- "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless." Exercising self-control over our impulsive reactions can be difficult. How exactly can we speak wisely when we don't feel like it? Pray for God's restraint, and pause before you speak. Psalm 141:3 - "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips. "Proverbs 16:23 - "Intelligent people think before they speak; what they say is then more persuasive." So, don't hurt hurting people more by speaking recklessly. Heal hurting people by speaking words of wisdom, which you can do by praying and pausing before you speak.

Prayer: Gracious and loving God, I praise your precious name. As I worship you today Lord, I ask for wisdom so that when I speak, my words will glorify you. Let my words reflect who you say I am. May I always be reminded that life and death are in the power of the tongue. And that what I speak, I call into being. I pray that my words will encourage,

motivate, edify, and build up the people I come into contact with and even those around me, who hear my voice. May I always remember to SPEAK LIFE. Let the desires of my heart be granted. In Jesus' name, AMEN AND AMEN!

Conquer your bitterness and speak kindly Proverbs 15:4 "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life; but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit." The tongue that soothes is a tree of life; the perverse tongue, a breaker of hearts. NJB Kind words heal and help; cutting words wound and maim."

When you speak words of kindness, they have a dramatic impact; as the healing powers of a tree of life. In the Bible, the "tree of life" represent immortality. On the other hand, words that come out of a hurtful spirit (terms such as deceitful words, or filthy language, or cutting words) have the power to "crush the spirit," "break the heart," or even "wound and maim." The tongue has the power to permanently cripple another person. When are you most likely to speak such damaging words? Hurtful words come out of a hurt heart. If you are finding yourself speaking cutting, crushing words to someone, examine what is in your heart towards that person. Have you been nurturing bitterness against them? How about an unforgiven hurt? Or a streak of self-centeredness? James 4:1, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

So, if your self-centered desires are at the heart of your hurtful words, what do you do about it? This next passage is rich with direction for a mean mouth.

Prayer - Father, put a guard over my mouth when I am about to say something I should not say. Whether it is a word that is untrue, a word that is negative, a word that is critical, or a word that discourages, Lord, stop the words before they come out of my mouth. Close the door of my lips and prevent the words from leaving my mouth. Father, take control of what I say. Help me think before I speak. Help me pause before I speak. Help me consider my audience before I speak. Some things are inappropriate for some to hear. Some things are inappropriate for all to hear. Some things do not need to leave my mouth. Father, guard my lips and control what I say. Father, help me guard my words when I say something. Help me make sure that the words I speak are worth hearing. If they are not, let me be silent. Being quiet may be better than being foolish. Being silent may be better than being critical, judgmental, or destructive.

Paul tell us something to get rid of, something to be, and something to do. Ephesians 4:31, 32, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." The key to being able to speak kindly and be an agent of healing and life for another person is to clear any bitterness out of your relationship with them. You do that through forgiveness. So, don't crush people with words of bitterness. Release them through forgiveness, and give life and healing to them with words of kindness.

Correct your attitude and speak positively. Proverbs 16:24, "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." In Solomon's day there was no milk chocolate or processed sugar. There was honey however, and its sweet taste was unlike anything else. There was literally nothing like it. When searching for an image for pleasant words, Solomon chose honey; sweet to the taste and healing to the body.

I invite you to experience the truth of this proverb through the sensation of taste. Enjoy a teaspoon of Honey and experience the proverb, "Pleasant words are sweet to the soul." As you're experiencing the delicious Honey sliding down your throat and coating your stomach, think about what you'd say to someone right when your stomach is smiling.

You'd say pleasant words, wouldn't you? Things like, "Thank you for that wonderful Honey. You're wonderful!" But, if you had a stomach ache, what kinds of words would we be more likely to hear? "What did you give me that for? Are you trying to kill me or something?" Your words are affected by what's inside you. When you're around someone who is habitually negative, whose words are not pleasant and sweet to the soul, you can just bet that what's inside them is not pleasant. In fact, the Bible tells us that this is the case.

Matthew 15:18, "But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart." If you were to examine your own words, and put the positive ones on one side of a scale, and the negative ones on the other side, which side would weigh

more? If you have to admit that you tend to be more of a negative person, just trying harder is probably not going to make you speak more pleasantly or positively. The Bible tells us that it goes deeper than that. You need heart surgery. Ezekiel 18:31, “Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” Once you have your heart right before God, you will find that what’s coming out of your mouth is more pleasant, sweeter to the hearer, and more healing to their souls. Don’t you want to be known for that kind of speech?

Another word for that type of speech is “encouragement.” Be an encourager. Find a way to work a word of encouragement into every conversation you have this week. Make it a goal to not leave a conversation without speaking a positive uplifting word to every person you talk to – you’ll be spreading around Honey wherever you go!

We have uncovered some strong prescriptions for our mouths in Proverbs. Solomon has told us to not give in to our moods, but to speak wisely. He says to forgive bitterness so we can speak kindly. Finally, we are to let God clean out our hearts and correct our attitudes so that we can speak positively.

I have a closing challenge for you. If you want to be the next E.F. Hutton, so that when you talk, people listen, try this: Ephesians 4:29, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.” There is no better summary of everything we have studied and prayed about during this week’s devotion.

Ask God to help you get rid of any unwholesome talk – reckless words, cutting words, negative words. Try finding some way to build people up during every interaction you have this week. Speak wisely, speak kindly, and speak positively.

“I promise you that on the day of judgment, everyone will have to account for every careless word they have spoken.” (Matthew 12:36 CEV).

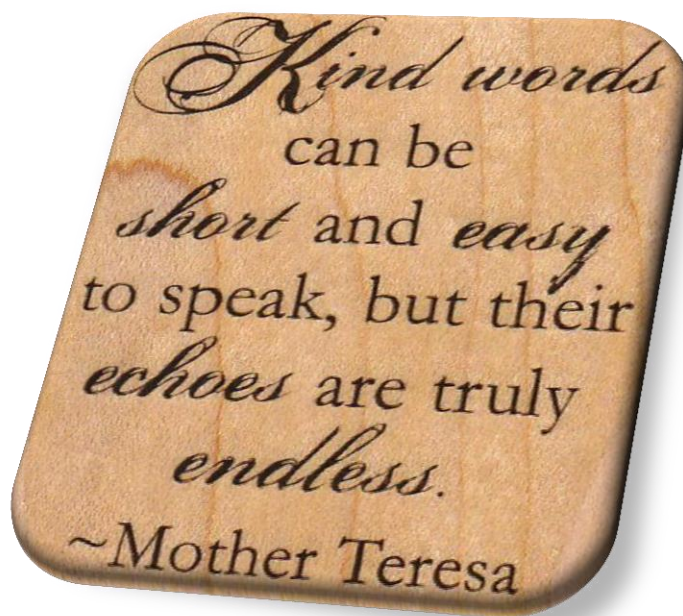
Prayer: Father, help me guard my words when I say something. Help me make sure that the words I speak are worth hearing. If they are not, let me be silent. Being quiet may be better than being foolish. Being silent may be better than being critical, judgmental, or destructive.

Father, sometimes there are words of encouragement that need to pass through my lips, let them through. Sometimes there are words of hope that need to be spoken, let me speak them. Sometimes there are words of exhortation that need to be shared, please don't let me remain quiet during those moments.

Father, there are times when someone needs to hear that I love them, let me say those words. There are times when someone needs to hear that I appreciate them, let me say those words. There are times when someone needs to hear something hopeful, let me say those words.

Father, there are times when I am afraid to speak. Please remove the fear that prevents me from speaking on behalf of the weak, the oppressed and the helpless. Please remove the fear that keeps me quiet when a child is neglected, abused, or ignored. Please remove the fear that prevents me from speaking when someone needs to hear of Your love for them. Help me never to miss an opportunity to speak for You. Help me to guard my words whenever I say something.

Father, there are times when I need to speak, and times when I need to be quiet. Give me the wisdom to know the difference and the courage to respond accordingly.



Father, guard my lips. Open them when they need to be opened and allow the words that need to pass through them to pass. Close them when they need to be closed and prevent any word that might do damage to another soul from passing through. In Jesus merciful Name, amen.