

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 8 - Number 15

The Week of February 5, 2023

Get Wisdom
Thoughtless Words
Proverbs 26:17-28

Proverbs has a lot to say about what we say and how we say it. The words we speak matter. Thoughtful words, aptly spoken, have tremendous power. Likewise, thoughtless words can be a destructive force. In this study, we will focus on the reckless words we speak that kill compassion, steal peace, and destroy unity in our families, friendships, and church.

As you read Proverbs 26:17-28...

- Bracket in parenthesis all the speech-defects mentioned in this passage.
- Circle every occurrence of the word *heart*.
- Underline any phrase that requires further unpacking as to its meaning.
- God is not explicitly mentioned in this passage, but His presence is implied. Double-underline where you see Him most implicitly.

17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own
is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.
18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death
19 is the man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I am only joking!"
20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel
are fervent lips with an evil heart.
24 Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips
and harbors deceit in his heart;
25 when he speaks graciously, believe him not,
for there are seven abominations in his heart;
26 though his hatred be covered with deception,
his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.
28 A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Warm-up: What's the most thoughtful thing someone said to you this past week?

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE TOGETHER (and additional Proverbs)

1. Quarrelsome and Contentious Speech (vss. 17, 21)

- Discuss the word pictures mentioned in verses 17 and 21. What's the warning entailed in both?
- Proverbs does introduce us to the irritating quarreler (cf. Proverbs 19:13). What can we do if we are the quarreling spouse or friend, and how can we help our spouse or friend who's marked by such a spirit?
- These verses also suggest the quarreler is a meddler or busybody. What prompts you to get involved in someone else's business? How can you take steps to leave it alone?

2. Lying and Deception (vss. 18-19, 24, 26, 28)

- Proverbs 12:19; 24:26: "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment."
- Proverbs 12:22: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight."
- Proverbs 20:17: "Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel."
 - Read again Proverbs 26:25. What does the number seven symbolize? What's the point?
 - As with all speech-sins, what common cause of lying is revealed in verses 24-26? Why is it important to remember that?

3. Gossip, Slander, and Backbiting (vss. 20, 22)

- Proverbs 11:13: "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered."
- Proverbs 16:27-28: "A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends."
- Proverbs 17:4: "An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue."
- Proverbs 17:9: "Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends."
- Proverbs 18:8: "The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body."
- Proverbs 20:19: "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbling."
- Proverbs 25:23: "The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks."

- How would you define/describe...
 - Gossip:
 - Slander:
 - Backbiting:
- Many of us have an appetite for gossip. What happens to us when we allow its morsels to sink into our inner parts?
- What is wrong with repeating something told to you in confidence? When are you tempted to betray a confidence or rationalize it?

4. Flattery and Bragging (v. 28)

- Proverbs 28:23: “Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.”
- Proverbs 29:5: “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”
 - How would you define or describe flattery? When we flatter a friend, how are we laying a snare?
 - How does flattery differ from a genuine compliment?
 - In what ways is bragging just another form of flattery?

APPLICATION/CHALLENGE

- Which speech-sins cause you the most trouble? What is one concrete step you can take this week to avoid trouble?
- **THINK** before you speak (Is what I am about to say **T**True, **H**elpful, **I**nspirational, **N**ecessary, **K**ind?). What is the hardest part in applying this?
- Explain the principle of *the second-chair*. What is the hardest part of applying it?
- How does this passage and the other proverbs reveal our need for the redemption found only in Christ and for His character to permeate our hearts and lives?

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

- Ask God to continue to do a new work in your hearts.
- Pray Psalm 19:14 over one another: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

