

Proverbs Live Well

10.25.20

Eat your words. Proverbs 18.21

### Intro – The Power of Words

We are in a series in the book of Proverbs called “Live Well.” Proverbs is known for being a book filled with wisdom and we’ve said that wisdom is the skill of living well in God’s creation. Today we are looking at the one topic the proverbs talks the MOST about – our words. More than anything else in our lives. More than money, sex, or family King Solomon talks about words. Over 90 times.

And the reason it talks about words is because words are very powerful...and we use them all the time. If you remember from earlier this summer Pastor Joey was preaching in Colossians where it talks about our speech and he held up a book and said we speak, on average, about 16,000 words a day. Bout as many words as in this book. We say a lot of words. And King Solomon is saying these words...all these words...are incredibly powerful. In fact I have one main verse for you today as our anchor:

**Death and Life are in the Power of the tongue... Prov 18.21**

It’s short & sweet and we are We are going to memorize it together. Right now.

- I’ll say it. Then we’ll say it together.
- Now change the word “the” to “my” and say it.
- Now look at friend or spouse or sibling – My death and my life are in the power of your tongue.

Your words are the most powerful thing you have. We know words have the power of death and life. We are made in the image of a God who creates by words. Who spoke LIGHT and there was light. Who said to a storm BE STILL and it was still. Whose angels said HE IS NOT HERE FOR HE IS RISEN! Who says if WE confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts God raised him from the dead we will be saved! The gospel news...believing those words...carry salvation with them! So...what are you doing with them? I want to actually show you why it matters what you do with them. I actually only showed you half of verse 21. Let me show you verses 20-21 in full

**20 From the fruit of a person’s mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is filled with the product of his lips.**  
**21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. -- Proverbs 18:20-21**

The words that come out of your mouth...will produce fruit. What I think most of us know is that the words that go out of our mouths REALLY impact others. And Other’s words REALLY impact us. We *KNOW that sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me...We know that’s garbage.* Words will absolutely hurt. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Somebody tells me I preached a good sermon man that builds me up. Somebody tells me I’m dumb...that will cut me deeper than a stick or a stone. Our Words have power in other’s lives. And that’s part of our sermon today. But what makes this particular proverb so enlightening is Solomon is saying MY words have the power of death and the

power of life IN ME. My words don't just shape others...they SHAPE ME also.

They go out like seed that produces fruit that one day I will eat. Your words don't just go out away from you, they come back to you and shape you. King Solomon is saying something we still say today: **You are going to eat your words.**

We usually say it talking about regret or proving someone wrong – “you said I'd never make it...now you will eat your words.” But Solomon is saying it's both ways. He's saying words are powerful and because they are so powerful...they produce when they go out. And whatever you are saying will impact the world around you BUT Your words will feed you TOO. Your words will shape **you**. It's this powerful cycle. Your words are the fruit of your heart BUT your words are also shaping you into who you are becoming.

Death and Life are in the power of the tongue. So what are you doing with them? Or even deeper...**WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOUR WORDS SAY YOU ARE BECOMING?**

Think about it for a second. If we had to turn the impact of your 16,000 words yesterday into a meal...what would be on your plate? Would your meal be spoiled because you spoke words that spoiled the lives of others? Would your meal be full of empty calories because you didn't really say anything that mattered yesterday? Who do your words say **you** are becoming?

There is so much at stake here and most of us are SO casual with our words. Today we are going to look at how Proverbs

says we can use our words to give life to others and even to ourselves.

I believe seeing and applying what God says about your words will revolutionize your life, it will strengthen our church, and it will make the gospel incredibly attractive to our community.

Here's our simple outline. I'm going to summarize what Proverbs says about our words into three categories. If the power of Life and death are in the tongue. Let's talk about how to give life with our words. Life Giving words are TRUE, GRACE-FILLED, and Encouraging.

### **1. Life Giving words are true**

**A truthful witness rescues lives, but one who utters lies is deceitful. -- Proverbs 14:25 (CSB)**

Those who speak truth rescue lives. Life giving words begin with truth. That's because our God is a God of truth. There is no darkness in him. There is no lying in him. Satan, God's enemy – is called the father of lies in scripture. So something as simple as truth...is profoundly important to God. The reason we trust God is because every word he speaks is TRUE. And his truth gives life to us. Without truth...we can't know anything. In fact the only reason we trust the bible is because we believe it to be the word of God...who is 100% true in all his ways. And just as his true words give life...so our words when we speak truth...give life to others and...give life back to us.

This is why Solomon in Prov 3.3 is telling his son to GET TRUTH. bind truth around his neck. Because people who speak truth become people who embody truth which produces good lasting fruit in you.

Lying on the other hand not only does harm to others...but has a way of unraveling you like nothing else. When you lie...you become one person to others and a different person inside. It's like you split your soul almost. And you do that long enough, and frequently enough, it will make you a selfish, duplicitous person who will grow cold and callous to God and others. I've seen this so many times as a pastor it's almost like a scientific fact. A guy tells me he is growing cold towards God. Numb to spiritual things. Having trouble caring about the things he used to care about. And I say ok, what deep dark hidden sin are you lying about? Because that LIE...that's the meal your soul is feeding on right now. And almost always once that gets confessed, then spiritual renewal slowly but surely begins.

**If you tell a truth about something you did, it becomes part of your past. but if you tell a lie it becomes a part of your future.**

Courtney and I are trying hard to install truth as a bedrock in our family. We discipline more severely for lying than just about anything else. Because we know through those choices to speak truth or lies you are becoming more like God or more like satan himself.

**I think about this in friendship.**

**5 Better an open reprimand than concealed love. 6 The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive. -- Proverbs 27:5-6 (CSB)**

We talked about this last week. The power of life is in truth. Especially when that truth might wound someone you love. Like we said last week when we talked about friendship...true words from a friend may wound...but they keep you from wounding yourself far worse. Are you willing to speak truth to your friend? Because speaking truth to them may be how you save them from great pain. Our kisses to them in a moment when they need truth is just like the kiss Judas gives Jesus. Endorsing sin by patting them on the back while they destroy their lives is betrayal!

**I think about this in preaching.** I love preaching. I love helping you see who God is and all he has for you in Christ. But sometimes I have to preach things that...well...I know they are going to sting. Because they are so counter cultural. I know they are going to come across as out-dated or ignorant. But TRUTH doesn't bend to how it is polling in current culture. Or maybe they are relevant truths but I know most of us are living out of step with it and I just don't want to step on your toes. I don't enjoy that. BUT, If I avoid hard truth in preaching you will become a Christian that avoids hard truth and I will become a person that avoids hard truth and God wants nothing to do with warm syrupy churches that don't represent all of him. All of his truth is good for us. So I gotta preach all of his truth, especially the hard stuff, because we believe you

can't have access to God's life giving power until you see and submit to God's life giving TRUTH.

**This is never more true than in evangelism.** You know how awkward evangelism is? Truly sharing the gospel is telling someone that we. Are all sinners. You included. And the penalty for our sin is death. Eternal separation from God in hell. That's where we are all headed apart from Jesus. Man that is OFFENSIVE. We say there is salvation from your sin fully and ONLY in Christ.

And while that is offensive...if it is TRUE then One of the cruelest things we can do is refuse to tell people closest to us about Jesus. You've got a friend or neighbor who doesn't know Jesus and you refuse to tell them...because it will be awkward? Because it might offend them?

- If you were giving a toast at a wedding...and I notice you have a black widow spider crawling on the rim of your glass...I don't care if I interrupt you. Because I'm saving your life. Who cares if I make a scene? Your life is worth it to me.
- Same is true in evangelism. If your neighbor's eternity is at stake, isn't interrupting their lives with the gospel...the one thing that can save them...isn't it worth it? That's why we emphasize whose your one? Because if you love them...you'll tell them the truth!

What kind of person do your words say you are becoming? Jesus says he is the way, the TRUTH, and the life. Walk in truth in your speech and you will find life there.

## 2. Life Giving Words are gracious

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. Proverbs 15:4

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. Proverbs 16:24

To say our words bring health & healing is to say they have the effect of restoration. That is POWER. And this is big to come alongside of speaking truth and say grace is equally as important. Because you can sometimes speak truth but the effect of your word isn't healing...it's breaking. Couple of ways we do this to others...Again remember we will eat our words...but here's a couple of common ways we get this wrong:

**We speak a heavy truth without a relationship to support it**  
Proverbs 12.18 – There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

When we don't have the relationship with someone, we might say something true...but because they don't know us they don't trust us. And that truth ends up being a sword cut. It harms. I have done this and had it done to me. I'm a fixer and a go getter and so I end up assuming people's strengths and pointing out their weaknesses. I think a lot of us do that. And if all this is true about our words...we should reverse this. We should assume everybody has weaknesses and instead...NOTE THEIR STRENGTHS. CALL IT OUT! I see God's grace in you. I see God's character in you!

Some of you dads listen up. Your sons are going to grow up resenting you if the only time you speak to them is to correct what they did wrong in the last game you saw them play. You might mean well. “How will they improve if they don’t know what they did wrong?” Well that’s true. But a deeper and more important question is how will they improve if their dad doesn’t believe in them?

I learned about one study done recently about the rise in popularity of the sport of Lacrosse. It’s rising in teenage boys much like soccer did a generation ago. And after surveying kids they found a major reason they started taking up Lacrosse is because it’s the only sport their dads didn’t know how to play. So they couldn’t criticize them.

Look I’m telling you I’m preaching to myself. I’m not just talking to dads I’m talking to moms I’m talking to friends I’m talking to spouses. Healing words are best received inside a strong affirming relationship. Truth is best received inside so much grace. So work on building that relationship! Point: Our words should always be seeking to heal and restore!

### **We gossip**

**19 The one who reveals secrets is a constant gossip; avoid someone with a big mouth. -- Proverbs 20:19**

Gossip is speaking to negatively about someone else to somebody else. And almost without exception the aim here is

not to restore. It’s to “vent” and it’s wrong. Even if you wrap it in a prayer request.

RARELY there might be a time you need to talk negatively about someone to someone else. But it should grieve you to do it and should only be done in love. And even with the hope of it ultimately leading to that person’s healing. But most of the time keep it to yourself. And also...avoid big mouths. If someone starts to gossip to you...Just ask “have you talked to that person?” “want me to arrange a sit down for the 3 of us?” Don’t entertain it.

We will become our words. Speak gracious words and they will come back to you and you will become a more gracious person. You will be a more trustworthy person. Listen when you gossip you indicate you are not a safe person. And you will lose trust. Safe people are quick to listen and slow to speak. We become our words.

### **3. Life Giving words are encouraging<sup>1</sup>**

**10:11 – The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.**

When we speak, our words are to perceive what God wants to do in a situation, and speak the words of life that call people to believe that! Our words should be encouraging words (literally: en-courage, speak courage), encouraging people to believe what God wants to do in the situation. Not tear down, but encourage.

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired and in some places just straight borrowed from J.D. Greear’s section on encouraging words in his sermon “Words that heal.” In his 2009 series in Proverbs called Still Standing.

See while Satan is the father of lies...one of his ways of tearing you down is speaking truth to you in a way that tears you down. Satan sees death and sin in us and says "THIS IS YOUR REALITY." You are a perpetual sinner. And he pushes us downward into death and despair. But God sees the same sin and death and instead calls you upward into hope and new life. He sees darkness and speaks light. He sees chaos and declares order.

#### **That's my prayer for you when you come to Mercy Church**

- You hear the voice that spoke into the grave of Lazarus saying for the sake of the glory of God by the power of Christ... RISE UP TO NEW LIFE!!
- **I hope you hear the voice of the one who said to the woman caught in adultery "neither do I condemn you...go and sin no more"**
- **The voice that says I have created you for good works to walk in. I see you not only as you are but as you could be.**
- **You are chosen, you have a purpose, you are Romans 8 more than a conqueror through him who loves you.**
- **You are not damaged goods you are a new creation washed in his blood and filled with his power**

The gift of encouragement is so underrated. It is powerful. Words are powerful! I LOVE being around people with this gift. They breathe life into me. And I'm telling you one of the primary roles we have as the body of Christ is to look for the slightest trace of God working in someone's life and say "I SEE IT! I SEE GOD WORKING IN YOU!!!" And we start fanning that flame.

- SOUL WORK: Fan someone's flame. Sounds weird. Every day for the next 7 days...every positive thing you think about somebody...tell them.
- Now two things: first I'm not talking about flattery. If Gossip is saying behind their back what you never would to their face, flattery is the reverse. Saying to their face what you would never say behind their back. So be sincere. Secondly, don't be creepy about it. Guys this isn't a license to be like "Girl the pastor told me to speak up when I see God at work and girl he did real good work with you."

**For real though try this and see not just what it does to others...SEE WHAT IT DOES TO YOU. You will become your words. As you speak life into others watch what it does to you.**

Let me close here – There is no question that it is out of the heart that the mouth speaks. And you cannot just change your heart by changing your words. Changing your words is an exercise that will alert your heart to its need for change. But the source of change is God himself

**(These words) are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Prov 4.22** The words of the Bible tell a story that goes into our hearts and changes us.

Jesus got a word of affirmation: baptism: this is my son, in whom I am well pleased. Not only did Jesus hear that word, this is how Jesus spoke to us. His words were full of acceptance and hope and grace. And herein lies the dilemma, the more you get to know Jesus, the more you realize there is

so much in you that is unlovely and unacceptable. How could God possibly accept us and approve us when He knows all our unloveliness? The answer is given on the cross, when Jesus cries out to God and heaven is silent. Jesus got the silent treatment from the Father. He said, “My God, My God...?”

But because he did that in my place, I can now receive in His place the words of affirmation. God says to me, ‘You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.’ In that affirmation I have the approval of the only one who really matters. Words you’ve always longed to hear, from your heavenly father... I approve of you and accept you. They are yours in Christ.

- That stops the war in our hearts—at last we have found the assurance of love we have longed for.
- Like Solomon says, you need to believe the word! The most important thing you can get out of a church is not that it is a place that gives you rules to follow or gives you goosebumps during worship: but to be in a place where you hear the message of the Gospel and God’s great love for you over and over. Where you hear that though you are unclean, you are forgiven. Though you are dead, you can be made alive. Though your sin is like scarlet, you shall be as white as snow.
- Psalm 103.12 - That as far as the east is from the west... so far does he remove our transgressions from us
- Psalm 23 - that surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.