



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Watch Your Words

Proverbs: Search for Wisdom, Part 3

Tim Badal | July 27, 2014



A few weeks ago, we began our current study on the Book of Proverbs, selecting various Proverbs that speak on wisdom. The tendency of human beings in today's society is to look to technology for the answers that perplex us most. As followers of Jesus Christ, perfect wisdom comes from God and His Word. Today, we are going to address wisdom with our words so that we might bring glory and honor to God, and also bring ourselves great blessing.

The Book of Proverbs wasn't written to remind us of how dumb we are. Proverbs were written by an earthly father—Solomon—to his son. Solomon wanted to show his son, whom he loved and cared about, how to live life well. Though Solomon was the earthly author, there is a heavenly Author as well. Namely, our heavenly Father Who loves us very much. He's not writing these things to say, "Hey dummy, you've really blown it. You've really messed up." He wants to show us how to live life well.

God has wisdom to share with us about our words. This wisdom allows us to speak in a way that not only glorifies God, but also blesses those around us. We're going to be pulling from various Proverbs, but I want to start by looking at [Proverbs 18:21](#). *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."*

Let that sink in just for a moment. Death and life are in the power of your words. Did you know that? Did you know that every word you speak has the potential to bring life or death to others? Maybe this week you've spoken words of life by encouraging another person, by blessing them and by giving them an extra boost of support. Or perhaps some of you have spoken words of death by telling people how dumb they are, or by telling people how worthless they are. Maybe you've spoken words of bigotry or words full of judgment with a critical spirit. Our words have the power of death and life. If you're like me, you could use a dose of God's wisdom concerning speech. We talk a lot, and the Bible has much to say about our words.

Let me pray for our time. Let me also pray for myself because I don't want to preach this sermon. I talk a lot and this sermon will expose my own shortcomings in this area. I've been given the gift of preaching and God has seen fit to use my mouth to do great things, but sometimes a person's greatest God-given strength can be their worst weakness. So, this is a weakness of mine. I confess it to you hoping that it will help you be honest with yourself about your own words.

Father God, we come and ask for Your blessing. Lord, use our mouths for Your Kingdom. Use our words for Your glory. Lord, I pray that everything we say would not only glorify You, but would lift others up. May they encourage others. When people hear our words, may they be filled with joy knowing that what we say is good and beneficial. Lord, bless us with wise words so that we might be a blessing to others. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen and amen.

1. Words Play a Huge Part in Our Lives

The first thing I want you to know is that the Book of Proverbs tells us that words play a huge part in our lives. I want to stress the word "huge" as much as possible because I cannot overemphasize the power that words play in our lives. This takes place

throughout human history. As we consider major events from the beginning of humanity up until today, we see that words played a huge role in shaping those events.

For example:

- A man once wrote on a piece of paper, "It was the best of times and it was the worst of times." Those words belong to **Charles Dickens** in *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- In a legislating house in Virginia, a man named **Patrick** stood up and said, "Give me liberty or give me death."
- Another Virginian wrote on a piece of paper and handed it to a group of his friends and compatriots. It said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." From the **Declaration of Independence**, **Thomas Jefferson**.
- "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." **Franklin D. Roosevelt** in his **inaugural address**.
- How about this one? "Ask not what your country can do for you." **John F. Kennedy**.
- "That's one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind." That's astronaut **Neil Armstrong** on the surface of the moon.
- Or this one? "I have a dream." **Martin Luther King, Jr.**
- How about this one from the early eighties? "**Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!**" Ronald Reagan said that from the Brandenburg Gate when he asked the Russian government to tear down the wall of communism symbolized by the **Berlin Wall**.

Words are powerful. They shape human history.

Words not only shape human history, they also change our lives. Some of the most memorable events in our lives are encapsulated by words. When applying to college, you desperately look forward to the words, "You're accepted." Then there's the question every girlfriend wants to hear: "Will you marry me?" If you are married, do you remember how those words felt? How about the words "I do"? People looking for a job hope to hear, "You're hired!" How about when the doctor tells you that you're pregnant? Or, "It's a boy!" Or, "It's a girl!" We remember those words because they impact the very essence of who we are. Sometimes, words cause us to feel profound sorrow. Some of us have heard words like, "It's cancer." Or, "It's terminal." I remember when my dad told me, "Your brother Chris is dead." Words can bring us up to the mountaintops, or they can bring us down to the pits.

Your words have great power and that power comes from God Himself. In the beginning, God created this world through the power of His Word. When Christ came, **John 1:1** says that He became the *logos*—the Word incarnate. He was the Word, "*and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" Jesus, the living Word of God. In your hands you have the written Word of God that leads and guides to holiness and truth. One day, the Name of Jesus will be spoken by God Himself and at that Name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD (**Philippians 2:10-11**). Words are powerful. They were present in the beginning; they will be present in the end. Will you use your words for God's glory or for your own gain? God has given us the power of words, but He's not the only one who wants to use our words. The devil knows the power of words as well.

In World War II, plastered over every military base were posters that said, "**Loose lips sink ships.**" These simple slogans told people, "Don't tell people where troops are going. Don't tell them where you're shipping out from or where you're going. The enemy has spies all over the place and they could use the information that you casually share with others. You could die, or it could mean one of your fellow soldiers dies. So be careful! Loose lips sink ships." The U.S. government wanted to be careful because they knew that information in the wrong hands could lead to disaster. We can either help the devil by propagating all kinds of disasters through words of hatred, or we can glorify God by speaking words of truth.

Words are plentiful

Now, there are a couple of truths we need to understand about words. Firstly, words are plentiful. We talk a lot. Did you know the average person says about 15,000 words a day? Men say about 13,000 words a day, and women, on average, say 17-18,000 words a day. To put that into perspective, if you were to transcribe the words that you speak on a daily basis, you could fill 60 pages. In a year the average human being could fill sixty-six 800-page books. For that reason, the Book of Proverbs devotes more than 150 verses in 31 chapters to the use of words and the tongue. It's something that we need to recognize. Because of this, we need to be receptive to God's wisdom regarding our words.

Words are able to penetrate

If you think that your words have no consequences, think about the last time someone told you, “I love you,” or, “I’m proud of you,” or, “You did a good job.” That doesn’t just hit your ears and fall away. No, those words go deep into the depths of who you are. Has someone’s encouragement ever made you feel like you could take on the world? Or, on the opposite end of the spectrum, maybe you’ve heard, “You’re worthless. You’re terrible. You’re good for nothing.” Those words don’t just bounce off of you; they cut deep. The words we say impact other people in profound ways.

Here are a couple of passages where words penetrate the soul in good ways. **Proverbs 12:25** says, “*Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.*” You can change a person’s morning by speaking encouraging words. You can lift them up from the ashes. But you can also tear down with a hurtful word. **Proverbs 12:18** tells us, “*There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts.*” Some of us have used words this week, whether knowingly or unknowingly, that have stabbed the individual to whom we spoke. We’ve thrust a steely knife into them because we haven’t considered the penetrating quality of our words.

Words go places that you can’t

Have you ever noticed that your words have a way of taking on wings and flying away? I can’t tell you how many times I’ve said something and wished that I had a net to catch what just came out of my mouth. **Proverbs 16:27** says, “*A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching (or an uncontrolled) fire.*” **James 3:5-6** tells us that the tongue is like a spark that starts the whole forest on fire. When we say something that we think we have control over, we deceive ourselves. Like an uncontrolled burn, those words can devastate everyone around us.

After being found guilty one day, a town gossip was given an object lesson by her pastor. He wanted to teach her about the speed at which words take flight. He told the town gossip, “I want you to take this bag of feathers and place a feather at each doorstep of the homes in the community. After an hour, I want you to go out and gather all of the feathers back.” She came back with only a handful of feathers and told her pastor, “All the other ones have blown away.” Like feathers, our words get caught up by the wind, going places we never thought they were going to go. So be careful because your words can take flight.

2. Words Can be Incredibly Harmful

Before you think, “I better not say anything,” recognize that you have a choice. You can use words for good or for bad. It’s up to you. The Book of Proverbs talks about both usages. There are words that are harmful and words that are helpful.

First, let’s address words that are harmful. What does the book of Proverbs say about words that hurt? The Bible clearly tells believers to abstain from any kind of unwholesome words that will tear down the lives of those around them. Proverbs reminds believers of the harmful ways we can use words against people.

Gossiping

Proverbs 18:8 says the following: “*The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.*” The gossip is like a caterer. He doesn’t set out the full meal, he sets out appetizers. The gossip walks around with a tray of *hors d’oeuvres* saying, “Just have a little.” Gossip whets the appetite for more. It always says, “Tell me more! Tell me more!”

Once a man was gossiping with his friends about the newest scandal, and one of the friends exclaimed with excitement, “Tell me more! Tell me more!” To which the gossip said, “I’ve already told you more than I know!” When we gossip, we are telling more than we actually know and most of it is not even true. So we need to be careful because gossip is a major issue within the church. We cluster around our friends whispering, “Did you hear this? Did you hear that? Did you hear about so-and-so?” We set out half-truths, or truths that someone doesn’t need to hear. It only causes a hunger for more.

The gossip controls the story. If you are the gossip, the person who hears that sweet and scandalous gossip believes what you say. They don’t know anything else; there’s no fact checking. No one says, “Is that really true?” Here are a couple of things you need to say in order to stop gossip:

1. “Are you sure about that?”
2. “Should you be talking about that?”

As soon as gossip is heard, human nature says, "Tell me more!" because you want the power of knowing what's going on. Remember that gossip is a sin. The Book of Proverbs says that gossip starts out really good, but it can bring great problems to those who share it as well as to those who hear it.

Lying

Proverbs 6:16-19 speaks about the seven detestable sins and lying is one of them. A lying tongue is detestable to God. **Proverbs 12:19** says, *"Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment."* Have you used your words this week to deceive people? Have you used your words this week to disguise your real feelings? When someone asks, "How are you doing?" and you know you're doing lousy, do you put on a smile and say, "I'm doing great"? If so, you just lied! You just deceived! You disguised your feelings and you've spoken a lie. Have you pointed the finger at someone else in order to escape punishment? You're lying. Understand, lying is the language of the devil and unbecoming for a follower of Christ. But we do it all the time, don't we?

Sometimes, we lie for fun. Every time I preach on lying, I share this illustration from my own life. Many of you know that I run a catering business. One time, I was grilling at a catering event and this young kid with a skateboard kept hovering around me. Have you ever met a kid who follows you like a shadow? All I could think was, "Get away from me! I've got work to do!" The kid was incessantly talking and asking all kinds of questions. "What's this for? What's that for? Tell me about this?" In my sin I thought to myself, "You know what? I'm going to take control of the situation and have a little fun with this kid."

So I said, "Hey, I see you're a skateboarder."

He says, "Oh yeah, I love skateboarding."

I said, "You know what? I was once a professional skateboarder."

And the kid was like, "Wow! That's awesome! Tell me more!" And I saw that his skateboard was a Tony Hawk skateboard. I didn't really know much about Tony Hawk, but I knew he was a skateboarder.

I said, "Yeah, me and Tony, we go way back. Tony says that I'm the world's best skateboarder."

"Wow! I thought Tony Hawk was the greatest, but now you're the greatest. This is amazing! I can't wait to tell my friends I met a real professional skateboarder." If he had looked at my size, he would've seen that I was clearly lying.

So then he says, "Where do you skateboard?"

I said, "You know, a lot of you guys go to your local skate parks. I've got a massive skate park in my backyard."

"That is awesome! Man you're the greatest. How high is your half-pipe?"

I said, "Well, how high do you think it should go?"

"Well, I think it should be 20 feet."

"Mine goes 30 feet!"

"Oh my goodness, this is amazing!"

He's ready to get my autograph, but I don't think much of the conversation after that because he leaves and goes skateboarding. I've made his day.

The next day, I'm at home after church and the doorbell rings. That same little kid is at my front door! I think to myself, "How in the world did you find me?" Then I begin to think about all the things I had said. And he says, "I'm here to see your skate park! I brought my skateboard." And I'm thinking, "Who told him I live here? Did he follow me in the van?"

He says, "I saw your van and I knew it was your house."

And I said, "Where did you come from?"

He says, "My uncle lives right next door."

Let me tell you something: I have a great neighbor and he was laughing his head off in the front yard going, "Real nice, Badal! Lying to little kids." And the kid still doesn't understand that the mean guy behind the grill was lying to him.

The little kid asked me, "Where's the skate park?"

I said, “There’s not skate park, kid. Let me tell you about the subject of lying.” I sat down with him on the front stoop and had to tell him I was lying.

Lying will always be caught. I cannot tell you how many times I’ve told lies and inevitably I get caught. They either get found out or confessed by the liar. I have to tell someone when I’ve lied because it eats me alive. It gnaws at me until I say, “You know what? I was lying.” Lying is the language of the devil. It’s not good for us to do, so stop doing it. No matter how easy it is, no matter what fun you get out of it, no matter what it is, stop doing it. Your lies will find you out.

Seducing

A third type of harmful speech is seducing words, or flattery. Flattery is lying in a garden of beautiful flowers. Some of us are really good at buttering people up and saying things that aren’t quite true. “Brown nosing” is another term for seducing words, or flattery. Why do you brown nose somebody? We think that if we flatter someone, that person will do good things for us in return. It’s selfish.

Proverbs 29:5 says, “*A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.*” When we flatter people, we need to be careful. The most common example in the Book of Proverbs of a person who uses flattery is the prostitute. Speaking to a young man, Solomon says, “*For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil*” (**Proverbs 5:3**).

Usually the people who harm us the most are the people who have praised us the most. Be careful when a person says, “You’re the greatest. You’re the most awesome person. You’re the best.” Many visitors have come up to me after Sunday’s sermon and said, “You’re the greatest preacher I’ve ever heard.” I’ve heard people in the foyer rave about my sermons. And you know what usually happens? They never come back. Be careful not to define your worth by the flattery of others.

Anger

Fuming words and words of anger are also harmful. **Proverbs 29:22**, “*A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.*” How often have you gotten into trouble because you’ve allowed your anger to make its way into your mouth? You might not even mean what you say, but those words cause great harm. How many times have you allowed your anger to get the best of you? As a result, relationships are ruined, opportunities are lost and your testimony is soiled because you could not bridle your tongue. It’s not a sin to be angry, but Scripture tells us to not let our anger turn to sin: “*Be angry and do not sin...*” (**Ephesians 4:26**). Usually the first place you sin is with your words.

Talking too much

A final way our words can be harmful to others is by talking too much. **Proverbs 10:19** says, “*When words are many, transgression is not lacking.*” It means, “Be careful. Don’t talk so much because when you do, the probability of sinning increases exponentially.” The more you talk, the more opportunity you make for sin. Some of us need to start talking less. We don’t need to be the one who always has the answer. We need to allow the Spirit of God to fill our speech which may require talking less.

3. Words Can be Extremely Helpful

You might be tempted to say, “Well, I won’t talk anymore because it will only cause trouble.” But that’s not what Proverbs says. We can use our speech in helpful ways. You want to use your words for good? You want to help people? You want to mentor people? Here are four ways from the Book of Proverbs that you can speak helpful words.

Equipping

Use your words to equip others. **Proverbs 10:31** tells us, “*The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom.*” **Proverbs 15:7**, “*The lips of the wise spread knowledge.*” One of the ways that you can be helpful to those around you is by speaking wise words. The quality of your words should be glorious and worthwhile. Make wise speech a habit so that when someone comes to you and says, “Hey, I could use some advice,” you can give them good advice.

Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to have dinner with a friend and mentor of mine. His name is **Pastor Larry Osborne**. He pastors an incredibly large church in San Diego. The thing I love most about Larry is that every time he talks, I just want to take out a note pad and write it down. He constantly speaks nuggets of wisdom. I tell him over and over again, “Say that again. Say it again so I can remember that. I don’t want to forget your advice on how to be a better husband, how to be a better father, how

to be a better pastor, how to be a better Christian.” They’re not just fortune cookie statements. He speaks the truth and knowledge of God applied to everyday life. I later told my wife, Amanda, “I want to be like Larry. When people come to me for advice, I want them to say afterwards, ‘Man, Tim gave some great advice; it was gold. I’ve learned so much about who I am and what life is about.’” We need that. That’s why older men are to teach younger men, and older women are to teach younger women (**Titus 2**). You’ve been equipped with life experiences to help equip others.

Exhorting

In **Proverbs 17:10**, we are reminded that a good friend is one who will lovingly speak hard truths, even when it hurts. There are times when a brother or sister in Christ will need to hear a word of exhortation. That brother or sister in Christ needs to hear, “You know what? The thing I just saw you do was not becoming of a Christian. What I heard you say probably wasn’t the best thing. You probably could have done it this way. You could have done it that way.”

Jon Pilkington, one of the elders here whom I’ve come to trust as a close friend, exhorted me once as a fellow elder. After I did something, Jon pulled me aside, away from all the others, and said, “Brother, I need to talk with you.” He told me that I had done something unbecoming of an elder and that God was not glorified by my actions. Now, I could have gotten angry and said, “Who do you think you are? You think you’re perfect? You don’t make mistakes?” Because I knew that Jon loved me and cared about me, I sat there and received his exhortation. This isn’t an easy thing to do, but the church desperately needs exhortation.

Be careful you don’t become legalistic; don’t point out the specks in brothers’ and sisters’ eyes while you have a log in your own (**Matthew 7:1-5**). Rather, through grace, mercy and love, tell one another, “What you said—or what you did, or what you are wanting to do—is unbecoming of a believer. Let’s talk about it.”

Encouraging

What about the issue of encouraging?

- **Proverbs 12:25**, *“Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.”*
- **Proverbs 15:4**, *“A gentle tongue is a tree of life.”*
- **Proverbs 15:23**, *“To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!”*
- **Proverbs 16:24**, *“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”* Any medical doctor will tell you that encouragement helps the human condition.

Yet, far too many of you live your lives like those two crotchety **old men on the Muppet show** who sit up in the balcony. You remember those guys? They would say things like, “I thought that was a terrible show. I thought that was a bad joke.” You do the very same thing. You do it at church. You do it with your kids. You do it with your spouse. And you do it at work. Like those Muppet characters, you are crotchety all the time, critiquing everything and no encouragement comes out of your mouth.

Some of you dads have said nothing to your children except, “You didn’t do this. You didn’t do that.” Critical words are far easier for a father to say than words of encouragement. I know that to be true in my own life. It’s easy to yell at the kids. However, a godly man lifts up his children. It’s easy to be critical and nag your husband about what he doesn’t do. It’s hard to find the good in what your husband is doing and to encourage him. It’s easy to tell your wife, “You don’t do this; you don’t do that,” but can you encourage her?

Your life will be different if you would just be known as a **Barnabas**, as one who encourages. Barnabas is one of those people in the Bible who I want to meet. Barnabas was so encouraging that when he showed up, everybody was glad to see him because he just lit up the room. You might be the last one people at work want to see. You’re the last one people in your family want to see. You’re the last person your kids want to see because you’re not encouraging. Allow your words to be like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul (**Proverbs 16:24**). Share words of encouragement instead of just critique upon critique.

Evangelizing

The fourth way our words can help others is through evangelism. I found a couple of Proverbs that speak to this.

- **Proverbs 10:21**, *“The lips of the righteous feed man.”*
- **Proverbs 11:30**, *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.”*

Why are our words so important? Because, as followers of Jesus Christ, what God uses to save souls is the preaching of the gospel. How do you preach the gospel? Some say, "Preach the gospel and if necessary use words." Good point; don't take it too far. You could be tempted to think, "I don't have to say anything. I'll live such a good life that people will just walk up and say, 'I need Jesus! Just by watching you, I get it. Now I understand that I'm a sinner.'" No, we have to use words. We have to speak the words of the gospel.

Of the 15,000 words you shared yesterday, or the 100,000 words you shared last week, what percentage of them had to do with Jesus? What percentage of them were about Jesus as you spoke with other Christians? What percentage of them had to do with sharing the gospel with unbelievers? We're called to evangelize. "*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news*" ([Isaiah 52:7](#)). How beautiful is the tongue that proclaims the truth of the gospel. We need to speak the gospel to others.

Remember, "*Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water?*" ([James 3:11](#)). One of the greatest hindrances to your evangelism can be your words. When the opportunity comes to share the good news, it's wasted because people think, "Where is this coming from? I've never heard you talk about these things. I've never heard you say such things." We need to right our words so that when the time comes to share the gospel, people are willing to hear and receive it.

4. Words will Produce a Harvest

When you speak, you're spreading seed. With every word, a seed gets planted. What kind of harvest are you producing? Your words will always produce a harvest. Will your harvest be weeds, thorns and thistles, or will it be words that bring life and blessing? The Book of Proverbs gives three metaphors on what your words should produce in the lives of others.

Refreshing waters

The first metaphor is refreshing waters in [Proverbs 10:11](#). Are people refreshed when you speak to them? I was filled up after speaking with an encourager like Larry. I was ready to take on the world. When people see you do they think, "I'm glad you are here. I want to hear from you. Every time you talk I'm always so refreshed. I'm so filled up."? Or do they say to themselves, "When will you just shut up? You drone on and on and on; and you always talk about yourself." Are your words refreshing to the listener?

Outstanding food

Are your words like outstanding food? [Proverbs 16:24](#) says that gracious words taste so good that they're sweet to the listener. Are your words like a delicious meal? When people hear you talk, do they say, "That was good. Man, I want more. When is he going to bring out the dessert?"

Healing to broken bones

Are your words healing to the bones? In that same passage, Proverbs 16:24 says that good, wise words are healing to the bones. Your words can do one of two things: they can break bones or they can bind them up. Which will you choose? How are you going to use your words?

5. Words are Made Healthy through the Right Habits

So what do we do? Because, like me, I'm sure that many of us struggle with our words. How do you change your words? How do you start living according to the Proverbs? Healthy words come from healthy habits. So you've got to have the right habits. The Bible articulates how to get control of our tongues.

Admit you have a problem

Admitting the problem is the first step of recovery. When God was commissioning him to do great things for the nation of Israel, Isaiah had to stop and say, "Wait a minute, God. I'm a man of unclean lips and I come from a people of unclean lips ([Isaiah 6:5](#))."

Can you admit that today? Can you admit your mouth gets you into trouble?

While God uses my mouth for great things as a preacher, my mouth gets me in more trouble than any other part of my body. I get so frustrated because as a 38-year-old man I should know better by now! I have to frequently go and say, "I'm sorry" to people because some stupid comment comes out of this big, fat mouth. Until you admit to yourself that you have a problem with your tongue, you'll never be stable. So you need to admit it.

God says that when we admit and repent of our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (**1 John 1:9**). Hallelujah! Your mouth problem doesn't have to stay that way because, by the blood of Jesus Christ, it can be restored once and for all. I am so grateful that at 38 I'm not struggling at the same level as when I was 21. Be thankful. God's at work in you.

Be accountable to two others

There are two people you need to be accountable to concerning your mouth. Number one: God. Here's the reason why. There's only One Who hears everything you say, that's God. So you need to pray, "Lord, You hear everything that I say. You know what I say. You know why I say it. I'm going to take my mouth and tongue and I'm going to place them at Your feet. I'm not in control of them, You are."

Before you think your problem is in your head, know that it's in your heart. Jesus said that out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks (**Matthew 12:34**). You've got a heart problem. I've got a heart problem. *"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it"* (**Jeremiah 17:9**). We need to go to God and pray, "God, hold me accountable as a follower of Jesus Christ who's been given a new heart. Where is this garbage coming from? God, it's not from You; it's from the devil. It's from my flesh, rid me of it. Hold me accountable to that."

Here's the reason: **Matthew 12:36** shares frightening words for a big talker like your preacher. *"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak."* How many careless words have you spoken? You could fill volumes with the stupid things I've said and God says, "We're going to talk about that up in glory. You're going to give an account." So what do you do? You keep short the accounts with God. You ask for His forgiveness.

The second person you should be accountable to is a faithful friend. There's a man in our church who is a great model of this. He has a problem with lying. That's his struggle. And every once in a while I'll have to call him because he's asked me to hold him accountable. Those phone calls are so important to me because they remind me of the importance of accountability. Sometimes he'll call and say, "You know, we were just talking about an hour ago. Do you remember I told you this? That wasn't true. I don't know why I said it, but I did. Please forgive me. Would you hold me accountable?" What a model!

When you lie, when you exaggerate, when you curse, allow people to hold you accountable. Keep short lists with God and short lists with others. Don't let your shame for your sin keep you from seeking accountability.

Take an axe to your words

If you've got a problem with your words, then take an axe to them. Cut them down. If your mouth gets you into trouble, stop talking so much. **James 1:19** says that we are to be slow to speak. Some of you find yourselves in trouble because your mouth is moving so fast that your brain can't catch up. Get rid of the words and then you won't have to be worried about what you said.

Become an active listener

In that same passage, James tells us to be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

- **Proverbs 15:31**, *"The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise."*
- **Proverbs 19:20**, *"Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future."* There's a reason we need to be quick to listen. It's because God is speaking to us. Many of us are wondering, "When is God going to talk to me?" And the problem is He can't get a word in edgewise right now because we're talking too much.
- **Proverbs 18:13** says, *"If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."*

I'll close with this. It's not a Proverb but a poem that I think is a good review:

A wise old owl lived in an oak.
The more he heard, the less he spoke.
The less he spoke, the more he heard.
So why can't we all be like that wise old bird?

Slow to speak, quick to listen and slow to become angry ([James 1:19-22](#)). God has given people a great ability to communicate with words. However, this gift comes with a responsibility and a commitment to follow the wise words of our loving Father Who wants us to speak words of life, not death. Be empowered by the Holy Spirit this week. Control your tongue and use it to bless and encourage others. Use your words to glorify God by sharing the gospel in a way that you haven't before.

Let's pray.

Father God, we could spend a lot more time on the verses that You've laid out for us in Proverbs about our tongue. We ask Your forgiveness for the careless, harmful words we've spoken. Lord, fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Fill us so that our words will be words of life, not of death. Lord, if our words have hurt others, let us be quick to go and seek restoration. Let us find someone who can hold us accountable. Lord, we don't want to get to Heaven and have to give an account for all of the careless things we've said. Lord, what powerful words You've shared in Your Word! Thank You for the gift and the ability to communicate. But Lord, with every gift comes responsibility. Lord, I pray that we would seek to live differently this week.

Now send us forth, Lord, because we're going to go and start talking with others. Lord, from the moment we begin to talk after this service let us strive to encourage, equip, exhort and evangelize instead of speaking words that can harm. We need Your help, Lord Jesus. We need Your Spirit. So fill us as we go throughout this week. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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