

Wisdom 101: Proverbs

Lesson #3 – Words to the Wise

Words from Wisdom

Read Proverbs 8, and use the space below to write down every characteristic of true wisdom you find in the passage. Are there any that surprise you?

How To Wise Up

9:10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (NASB)

“Wisdom begins with respect for the Lord, and understanding begins with knowing the Holy One.” (NCV)

16:24 – “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” (NASB)

“Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.” (NLT)

23:23 – “Buy truth and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding.” (NASB)

“Invest in truth and wisdom, discipline and good sense, and don’t part with them.” (CEV)

27:5 – “Better is an open rebuke than love that is concealed.” (NASB)

“A spoken reprimand is better than approval that’s never expressed.” (The Message)

Can you think of a time someone shared kind words with you that really gave you strength and healing? When are times that we should focus on sharing kind words with others? What about an open rebuke – why would that be better than concealed love? In what situations would an open rebuke be a sign of love?

On Wisdom...

In one of the first cases the famous lawyer Clarence Darrow faced, his older opponent kept referring to him as “my beardless adversary,” in an effort to belittle him in the eyes of the jury. Darrow responded by telling an anecdote: “The king of Spain once entrusted a youthful liege with an important message to the court of a neighboring monarch. The latter flew into a rage and cried, ‘Does the King of Spain lack men, that he sends me a beardless boy?’ The young ambassador answered, ‘Sire, had my king but known you imputed wisdom to a beard, he would have sent you a goat.’” Darrow won the case, reminding us that age does not necessarily bring wisdom. The Proverbs do tell us that wisdom is available to all, regardless of age, as long as we know the right place to look.

Wisdom Has Its Benefits

10:11 – “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” (NASB)

“The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain; the words of the wicked conceal violent intentions.” (NLT)

13:3 – “The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.” (NASB)

13:3 – “Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.” (NLT)

Read James 3:13-18. In many ways, the book of James reads like the book of Proverbs.

He contrasts worldly wisdom with godly wisdom. What are the characteristics of worldly wisdom? What about the qualities of godly wisdom? List them in the space below. Now read 1

Corinthians 1:18-31. How are the two types of wisdom contrasted there?

James also tells us how to get wisdom. How are we supposed to gain wisdom?

The Result of Foolish Talk

12:13 – “An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will escape from trouble.” (NASB)

“We trap ourselves by telling lies, but we stay out of trouble by living right.” (CEV)

14:3 – “In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will protect them.” (NASB)

“A fool’s proud talk becomes a rod that beats him, but the words of the wise keep them safe.” (NLT)

15:4 – “A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.” (NASB)

“Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” (NLT)

18:13 – “He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.” (NASB)

“Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.” (NLT)

18:21 – “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” (NASB)

“Words kill, words give life – they’re either poison or fruit – you choose.” (The Message)

Turn back to James 3, this time reading the first half of the chapter. What images does James use to describe the power of the tongue? Why do you think he chooses those?