

Wisdom 101: Proverbs

Lesson #2 – War of Words (Wise vs. Foolish)

Words are Important

The Proverbs often contrast the wise and the foolish, many times by looking at wise and foolish words. Listen for that contrast in these verses.

12:23 – “A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.” (NASB)

“The wise don’t make a show of their knowledge, but fools broadcast their foolishness.” (NLT)

18:4 – “The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.” (NASB)

“The words of a person’s mouth are like deep waters. The fountain of wisdom is an overflowing stream.” (God’s Word)

14:5 – “A trustworthy witness will not lie, but a false witness utters lies.” (NASB)

“An honest witness does not lie; a false witness breathes lies.” (NLT)

How are wise and foolish words different? Why do you think words like “deep waters” and “fountains” were used by the Proverb writer to describe wise words?

16:23 – “The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.” (NASB)

“A wise person’s heart controls his speech, and what he says helps others learn.” (God’s Word)

10:20 – “The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.” (NASB)

“The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless.” (NLT)

What do these passages reveal about the connection between our words and our hearts? Read Luke 6:45 and answer this question – What are some statements that indicate a godly heart?

What are statements that would indicate a heart without God?

Lies

We might not think lying is a big deal, but the Proverbs tell us that God does.

6:16-19 – “There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.” (NASB)

“There are six things that the Lord hates, even seven that are disgusting to Him; arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill innocent people, a mind devising wicked plans, feet that are quick to do wrong, a dishonest witness spitting out lies, and a person who spreads conflict among relatives.” (God’s Word)

13:5 – “A righteous man hates falsehood, but a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.” (NASB)

“A righteous person hates lying, but a wicked person behaves with shame and disgrace.” (God’s Word)

25:18 – “Like a club and a sword with a sharp arrow is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor.” (NASB)

“Anyone who tells lies against the neighbors in court or on the street is a loose cannon.”
(The Message)

*What kinds of lies do we usually think are ok? Check out John 8:44-45, as Jesus describes Satan.
What kind of perspective should that description give us about lying?*

Insults

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” might be a popular saying, but we know it isn’t true. Here are some results of insulting others.

10:18 – “He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool.” (NASB)
“Hiding hatred makes you a liar; slandering others makes you a fool.” (NLT)

20:20 – “He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness.”
(NASB)

“The lamp of the person who curses his father and mother will be snuffed out in total darkness.” (God’s Word)

Why are insults so prevalent today? Are there ways we might even insult others without knowing it? How does Jesus model responding to insults?

Gossip

This is perhaps one of the most difficult temptations to overcome; it can be so tempting to spread rumors. These Proverbs remind us to resist that urge.

11:13 – “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.” (NASB)

“Whoever gossips gives away secrets, but whoever is trustworthy in spirit can keep a secret.”
(God’s Word)

17:4 – “An evildoer listens to wicked lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.” (NASB)
“Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander.” (NLT)

18:8 – “The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.” (NASB)

“Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deeply into one’s heart.” (NLT)

Have you ever been hurt by gossip? How does it affect a person when a rumor is spread about him or her? What are some ways we often rationalize it?

About Gossip...

Coming out of church, Mrs. Smith asked her husband, "Do you think that Perkins girl is dying her hair?"

"I didn't even see her," admitted Mr. Smith.

"And that dress Mrs. Davis was wearing," continued Mrs. Smith, "Really, don't tell me you think that's the proper outfit for a mother of two."

"I'm afraid I didn't notice that either," said Mr. Smith.

"Well," snapped Mrs. Smith, "a lot of good it does you to go to church."

Principles for Reading the Book of Proverbs

By Tremper Longman, author of *How To Read Proverbs*

1. Keep in mind the structure of the whole book of Proverbs as you read any part of it.
2. Reflect on the parallelism of a proverb by asking how the second colon (part of the statement) sharpens or intensifies the first.
3. Identify the imagery in the proverb and then unpack it by asking how the two things being compared are similar and different.
4. Think about the source of wisdom in a passage.
5. Is the passage an observation, a warning, a bit of advice, a reflection, or some other kind of teaching?
6. Since proverbs are not true in any and every circumstance, ask under what circumstance the proverb may or may not apply to a situation. How can you tell?
7. Does the proverb mention imply a reward or punishment that will result from obedience or disobedience?
8. If the passage is addressed to a young man, ask how it applies to you.
9. Using a commentary, study the Near Eastern background of the passage you are considering.
10. When doing a topical study, read through the book of Proverbs and pinpoint the relevant verses. Group them together, then study each group.
11. Try to identify biblical stories or characters who may illustrate the truthfulness of the proverbs you are studying.
12. Does the New Testament address the topic or teaching of a passage you are studying?
13. Think of Christ as the fulfillment of wisdom and how he might illustrate the wisdom of a passage you are reading.