

Mid Week • Proverbs Topics #4

INTRO

Tonight as we look at the book of Proverbs thematically, we'll be looking at the subjects of

1. Speech
2. Emotions
3. Peer Pressure
4. Business Ethics

SPEECH

In the days of Socrates, the Father of Greek philosophy, a young man had been hoping to meet the famous philosopher.

When he finally had the chance, he was so overawed by the intellectual giant that he scarcely dared to open his mouth to speak or to ask a question.

So they walked side by side for a while without conversation.

Then Socrates broke the silence and said, "Speak, that I may *see* you."

Socrates knew that there is a fundamental connection between soul and word.

Speech is the instrument for the manifestation of the human spirit

Jesus said that it was out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks

It's no wonder then that we should find abundant counsel in the Proverbs about speech

{Prov 10:19} In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

{20} The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.

{21} The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.

Words are the ambassadors of our soul - They reflect what's going on on in the inside

They represent us to those we meet and who overhear us

So wisdom calls for a guard on our speech

Proverbs 13:3 says . . .

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

This corresponds perfectly with what Solomon says in 10:19

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Those who talk all the time don't have the time to use discretion - they are too busy talking

We've all known blabbermouths - People who can't seem to shut up

No matter what the topic, they have an opinion

Many sins are sins of speech - so the more one speaks, the greater the likelihood of

trespass

Thinking twice about whether you *should* speak, and then if you decide to speak, what to *say*, is wisdom

Proverbs 17:28 says . . .

Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.

The modern equivalent of this is: "Better to stay quiet and let others *think* you're without knowledge, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

{10:20} The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little.

Good words are valuable for the simple reason that like anything that's valuable, it tends to be *scarce*

{Prov 11:13} A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.

The talebearer is a *gossip*

And as we all know, gossip can ruin relationships and destroy lives

Some people actually revel in gossip!

So much so, that Solomon would even class a certain type of person as a *talebearer*

This is the person who goes around sharing privileged information with people who ought not hear it

Gossips are driven by many motives, but the bottom line is their desire to show their own importance by possessing information that gives them a certain power over another person simply because they have it

A *secret* is just that - something that is to be kept in *confidence*

When a secret is broadcast to someone who ought not hear it, then it is no longer a *secret*, now it's *gossip*

And the person who speaks it is guilty of the worst kind of sin - the breaking of trust

The faithful person does not reveal secrets - he or she keeps the faith and trust committed to them

Proverbs 17:9 says . . .

He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends.

Prov 16:28

A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends.

Since Proverbs 6: 19 tells us that God hates those who sow discord among brethren, we ought to be on special guard against gossip - both in our own speech, and in guarding the integrity of our relationships at home, at school, and at church

{Prov 20:19} He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.

The best way to treat those who are proven gossips is to avoid them

And one of the ways to discern a gossip is by the presence of *flattery*
Gossips use flattery to soften their victims up
They appear friendly so they can gain your confidence
Once they have that, you will begin to share personal things - which is
precisely what they're after
So be careful of those who make themselves your instant buddy and heap
praise on you - they're digging for something.

{Prov 12:18} There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.

As James says, the power of the tongue is awesome!

It can wound, or it can heal

Wilfred Peterson wrote,

Soft words sung in a lullaby will put a babe to sleep. Excited words will stir a mob to violence. Eloquent words will send armies marching into the face of death. Encouraging words will fan to flame the genius of a Rembrandt or a Lincoln. Powerful words will mold the public mind as the sculptor molds his clay. Words, spoken or written, are a dynamic force.

Writing of Napoleon and his Italian campaign, Emil Ludwig said: "Half of what he achieves is achieved by the power of words."

Words are the swords we use in our battle for success and happiness. How others react toward us depends, in a large measure, upon the words we speak to them. Life is a great *whispering gallery* that sends back echoes of the words we send out! Our words are immortal, too. They go marching through the years in the lives of all those with whom we come in contact.

For years one woman had been a gossip

Her talebearing had done irreparable damage to dozens of lives

But she eventually fell under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and spoke to her pastor about her repentance

She asked him if there was anything she could do to compensate for all her years of gossip

He told her to take a feather pillow up onto the small hilltop just outside town

Then to open the pillow and release all the feathers and come back to see him

Thinking it a bit unusual, she did as he told her

The feathers were caught by the breeze and blew into town, scattering everywhere in the wind

She then went back to the pastor and told him she had done it

He told her there was one last thing she must do; go and collect every single feather

His point was made - While we can repent of gossip, once uttered, it's damage is

done and there is no way to reclaim it
Trust has been broken - and often times, reputations and relationships are ruined

{Prov 12:22} Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.

No comment needed here - but this verse could use some serious meditation!

{Prov 18:13} He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.

Here is a piece of sage advice I know I need to take to heart!

You know where you see this violated a lot is in *talk radio*

In both religious and secular call in shows you hear the hosts offering advice and counsel before they've heard the full matter

One of the great dangers of the information age in which we live is the rapidity with which people arrive at conclusions

In the age of the sound bite and the 20 second news story, people are encouraged to arrive at watershed decisions based on incomplete and biased information

If the extent of your exposure to current events is a 5 minute news program on radio or USA Today, then you ought not draw sweeping conclusion about life and the world

If Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Peter Jennings alone define the shape of your world, you might want to consider expanding your field of exposure substantially

In all the polls that ran during the impeachment hearings, the questions was asked of the American public, "Do you think the President should be removed from office?"

The answer was an overwhelming, "No."

But in further inquiries into the depth of knowledge about the actual charges and evidence against the president, people were virtually totally ignorant!

We tend to be all too quick to give our opinion because to fail to have an opinion makes us look stupid

But those who are genuinely wise are not worried about appearances

They are too busy listening, thinking, and arriving at a *proper conclusion*

{Prov 21:23} Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.

This winter has seen some devastating tragedies due to snow avalanches in the Sierras and the Rockies

Often times, all it takes to start an avalanche is a loud voice

One word, can affect such ruin!

{Prov 25:11} A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.

Here's the flip side to the negative power of the tongue - Good speech is like beautiful art!

The Museum of Art in LA has several wings, each devoted to different genres of art

There's the Greek and Romans sections

There's classical painting and sculpture

There's the work of the Masters: DaVinci, Rembrandt, Van Eyck, Titian, Durer, Caravaggio!

Then, in another wing is the Museum of *Modern Art*

And while much of it is gorgeous, another part is just plain, well - ugly!

Set a Caravaggio next to anything by Francesco Celestino and a 6 year old can tell you where the beauty, skill and value lies

Well, guess what - every one of us is an *artist*

Our canvas isn't fabric stretched over wood - And we don't work with pigments and a brush

Our canvas is the air, which we paint with words

We don't sculpt with stone and a steel chisel

Instead we mold hearts and minds with a chisel called ideas

The only question is - where would they hang our art: In the wing of classics along with the masters, or in the modern art wing along with the rest of the junk?

EMOTIONS

A few weeks ago we talked about emotions and their role in life

Tonight we want to take a brief look at a few proverbs as they give us counsel on how to deal with our emotions since they play such a critical role in our decision-making process

{Prov 12:25} Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.

Depression is a big topic today

Hundreds of thousands of people are in therapy and on medication to deal with the problem of depression

And while some depression is physiologically based, the majority of it is purely emotional in nature and genesis

Here we see a diagnosis for the root of a lot of depression - worry, anxiety

Think about it - anxiety is a fear of the future, that something bad is going to happen

If we give in to chronic worry, then it will rob us of hope, which is the essence of depression

The depressed person has lost hope

That's why it says a good word makes one glad

A good word will rekindle hope by helping a person realize there is help to be found

Prov 13:12 says . . .

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

One of the reasons why there's an epidemic of depression today is because of the rising complexity and seeming impossibility of life

The problems facing many people are monumental and people are feeling overwhelmed

Christians are not immune from this - that's why we need one another and need to be in regular fellowship with one another

We can encourage one another with a good word

So let me encourage you - Jesus is coming back! And until He gets back, He has left His Spirit to provide all that we need!

{Heb 10:24-25} And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, {25} not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

It seems almost impossible to live without anxiety today

For that reason we need to give all the more heed to Phil 4

{6} Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

{7} and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

{Prov 14:17} A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated.

Very simply - get a handle on your anger!

{Prov 14:29} He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.

The word "impulsive" means "short of spirit"

It pictures someone who is shallow, there is no depth to them

They live for the moment and fail to consider the consequences of either their attitudes or their actions

James 1:19-20 says

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

The wrath of man usually produces things like holes in walls, dented fenders, broken equipment, back eyes, and split lips - anything but the righteousness of God!

{Prov 16:32} He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

The man or woman who has conquered self, is the greatest of all warriors

They make Hercules and Xena look like wimps!

Alexander is arguably the greatest military genius of all time

By the age of 30, he had conquered vast realms - beyond the boundaries of the known world

But he was never able to conquer his own passions
In several a drunken rage, he said and did things that he later came to regret
with deep remorse
In fact, this is what led to his early demise

{Prov 18:14} The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, But who can bear a broken spirit?

Emotions are so powerful they can actually affect our physical well-being
Doctors have only recently verified the emotional basis of healing and recovery
If a person has a positive outlook, they recover much faster
But if they are prone to depression, they often do not recover at all but their
condition becomes chronic

{Prov 27:4} Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?

It comes as a bit of a shock to realize that most scripture references to jealousy are used in a *positive* sense

It is the *proper intolerance* of anything that would intrude between the lover and who is loved

We usually see it in reference to God's jealousy toward us

His love is a jealous love because He only wants the very best for us, and anything that would hinder the expression of that love comes in for His special dislike

Really, this kind of jealousy is a badge of love

But here we see the *dark side* of jealousy

This kind of jealousy is selfish and grasping

It sees itself, not as the lover of the one loved, but the owner

Good jealousy is a jealousy FOR the one loved

Bad jealousy is a jealousy OF the one loved - it's possessive in an exclusive sense

It smothers, controls, and dominates

And the person who finds themselves in a relationship with a person who is jealous like this usually feels so overwhelmed and smothered that they will do just about anything to get away

PEER PRESSURE

Peer Pressure is no purely modern phenomena - it is as old as man himself
Ever since there was more than one person, there has been the consideration of what the other person was thinking and the desire to gain their acceptance and approval

This is a subtle but powerful influence on how we live and the choices we make, so Solomon comments on it

{Prov 12:26} The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.

The key here is "choose your friends" - we do chose who we hang with
Don't just fall in with whoever shows you some attention

That is a trap, specially for believers, because the enemy is watching!

{Prov 13:20} He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.

The people we associate with will affect our course in life
Parents need to be helpful and active in their young children's lives in the selection of friends
1 Cor 15:33 says . . .

Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

{Prov 16:29} A violent man entices his neighbor, And leads him in a way that is not good.

It is part and parcel of evil that it must spread itself
[Describe ebola - dissolves tissue - internal disintegration - then, as host dies, seeks to enter a new host, throws the body into convulsions to throw itself out and onto others]
As we live in this world, we are going to be splashed with sin - but we don't have to let it infect us
[Jesus washing the disciples feet]

{Prov 18:24} A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Want friends - be friendly!
Want to be a *good* friend - don't be a fair-weather friend!

Some Misc. words on friendship . . .

{Prov 25:17} Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.

Don't overstay your welcome - don't be a mooch!

{Prov 27:14} He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, It will be counted a curse to him.

Be sensitive to the needs of those who are close to you
This verse recognizes that people are different
Some are early risers while others like to sleep in
Be sensitive to these differences, and instead of letting them become points of contention - use them as avenues of growth in your relationship
[More this weekend]

BUSINESS ETHICS

A number of good books have been written recently that apply biblical ethics to
Business and Management
The basis for most of these is the book of Proverbs

{Prov 11:1} Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.

[Describe how scales worked]

Dishonest weights are an abomination to God because they introduce theft and graft into the whole realm of economics and this directly effects the principle of stewardship by which we all live

This verse tells us that God's special hatred is reserved for crooked merchants
Honesty is required in business, specially of those who call themselves Christians

It's criminal how many merchants and businesses will use the fish symbol today as a marketing ploy

You would think that advertising your business and then using a fish to let others know you are a believer would mean that your business ethics would be superior and above reproach

Sad to say, that isn't the case for many

The fish doesn't guarantee anything - in fact in some cases, the only thing it guarantees you is that you're going to get ripped off!

Proverbs 16:11 says . . .

Honest weights and scales are the Lord's; All the weights in the bag are His work.

God had given specific commands to His people to they be fair and equitable in all their business dealings

The point of this proverbs is a reminder that our relationship with God affects all of life, not just some tiny little religious compartment

If we aren't applying our faith at work - then it's not likely we're applying it anywhere else

If our Christianity isn't strong enough to carry us through M-F, 8 to 5, it probably not strong enough to carry us to heaven

{Prov 22:28} Do not remove the ancient landmark Which your fathers have set.

In Israel, the land had been apportioned by God to the tribes and families

It was divided up and assigned by the use of lots as we saw last week

Fields were marked off by the use of landmarks; a pile of rocks, a tree, maybe even a fence

To move these markers was the worst kind of theft because all wealth in Israel was ultimately tied to the land

The person who moves landmarks strikes at the very heart of the Jewish national and social identity

This verse speaks powerfully to the biblical principle of private property

So important is this issue that one of the ten commandments forbids stealing and another even prohibits coveting that which belongs to another

Any economic or political system that wrests ownership of private property away from individuals and families and places it in the control of the state is anti-biblical

Socialism and Communism both fly in the face the biblical standard

Even when our government exercises Eminent Domain, there is cause for great concern

It's with real concern that we see the Federal government confiscating the

homes and property of thousands of citizens accused of drug trafficking
Or it's seizure of millions of acres of what they call "endangered lands"
The forced re-distribution of wealth we call the modern tax code is much more
socialist than capitalist and something we need to all keep a close eye on

**{Prov 22:29} Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before unknown men.**

Very simply - if you excel in your calling, you will be recognized for your work!

How much of the work we do is just to get by - offered half-heartedly and with a
minimum of effort and interest?

Hey, if we have to do it - why not do it as to the Lord and with all our interest
and effort?

This is specially true in the church

If you are teaching children in the S/S or Nursery - then pour your heart into it

If you're a host or hostess - do it with cheer and actively

If you're an usher - gush with ush!

{Col 3:23} And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

CONCLUSION -

Next week we'll finish our study in Proverbs with looking at the subjects of . . .

1. Government & Justice
2. Family
3. Miscellaneous proverbs
4. Then we will cover chapters 30 & 31 verse by verse