

Proverbs 10:19

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[0 : 00] the proverb we're going to look at today is still about how we speak because it's so important, isn't it? Such an important part of our way of living and interacting in the world. So Proverbs 10 verse 19, Proverbs 10 verse 19, when words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. The New Living Translation says, too much talk leads to sin, be sensible and keep your mouth shut. There are many Proverbs about the way we speak and that's not a coincidence.

Our words have power, not like God, but still derived power, because our words can tear up and build down. They can change life for good or bad. That's why we've got to be careful about what we say, how we say it and when we say things. This proverb is telling us to do two things, very simple. First is, don't talk a lot. Words are many, sin isn't absent. If we speak a lot, we will likely cause more trouble in this life. Why? Well, there's a number of reasons for that. Firstly, we are sinners. We're damaged goods. We often act, or rather react, out of our sin, not out of a place of grace and truth and love, and almost never without a mixture of the two. And so our words are too often not gracious enough, kind enough, encouraging enough. So by not speaking, you're literally stopping the chance of sinning.

Because it's likely that when we do speak, it's going to be a mixture of good and bad. Very often, in many circumstances, especially in precious situations, it's going to be that word, an angry word that stirs up wrath, not a gentle word that calms down.

Take an example of speaking too much being a problem. You meet someone at church, they ask how you are. They're not intending to get a serious discussion, just a polite, hi, how are you? But you take it as a chance to really let them know just how bad your week has been because your husband has done this and he hasn't done that and I thought he would do this and this and this person said something in this way that I didn't really like or I thought they were going to meet me. And so a lot of words coming out of your mouth, hi, how are you? Fine, thanks, how are you? But you've been wanting to get it out and the first person to ask you, you take it as an opportunity to bad mouth someone else. Your words are condemning you and bringing sin into existence if you think about it. So yes, you've got sin in your heart and sin in your brain is not a good thing. If you're feeling bad about someone and you're holding on to that whatever they've done wrong, having that in your heart and mind is bad, but when you speak it, you're basically sharing sin. You're making them part of your problem. So just keep it on the inside and don't say anything.

And of course you mustn't keep it on the inside, you've got to get rid of it, but at least don't share it then. How's that? Right? So it's very practical, this thing. Just, how are you? Fine. Problems, I wish I could tell someone. Yes, you do want to tell someone about having difficult relationships at home. Is there appropriate time to bad mouth them to the first person who asks you? No. You pray about it, go seek advice or help from another Christian and say, hey man, I'm really struggling with an issue at home. I really need your help to sort this out.

[3 : 42] Please, can you help me? That's very different, isn't it, than just bad mouthing? Okay. Rather speak to God, speak these words to God. If you've got to speak them, don't speak them to others and ask him to help change how you speak and what's going on in your inside.

Another problem with people who talk a lot is they're quick to give their opinion. When words are many, sin isn't absent and that's because the other person is trying to speak, but you're quickly speaking over them because you must, you have to tell them this thing now. And you find yourself speaking over or interrupting people a lot. We're too quick to give our opinion on a certain problem instead of not saying anything and listening and checking out where the problems are and just keeping quiet and offering advice maybe later down the line. Days down the line, not immediately, if it's needed at all. There was an issue this week and I thought I would help by giving advice. I was

very gentle and it still didn't help.

It still stirred up words. And so I just was like, well, next time, you know what? Let them sort it out and if it's an issue that needs to come to my attention, it'll come to my attention. I actually don't need to jump in and give my advice. People who have a high word count will likely dive in and give unneeded or unwanted and actually unhelpful advice. Likely.

Often not the best or wisest advice. At U-Turn, we used to teach the guys not to act on the first impulse when trying to solve a problem. Rather wait a few days and see if there aren't other solutions you can come up with instead of addressing it and speaking to the person right then and there. And very often, within three or five days, that original problem had disappeared.

Now in their lives, it was replaced with another problem, but you just give yourself that bit of time.

Don't say anything. Put a guard on your mouth. So let's see if we can practice that now.

[5 : 56] Now, someone says to you, talking after church, hi, how are you? You know, I really don't like the songs that we sang at church today. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Well, you know, there's this new way of playing and this singing. I don't think it glorifies God in the way that the old hymns used to do. If they say that to me or to Gene or to anyone, you feel like you want to defend or maybe even attack or maybe tell them to pipe down or whatever. So, I'm sorry you feel that way. Would you like some coffee? Well, you're not adding words.

You're not essentially trying to diffuse. You're just letting them talk. Okay, that's fine. You don't have to talk back. They didn't ask you to say anything. They didn't ask your opinion. Don't give it. No need to give it. Don't offend. Don't attack. Just leave it. If it's a person with a problem and you want to address it at a later point, do that at a later point.

Say, listen, a few days later, hi, I just, you know, you spoke with me about these things. Might need to want to look at how you speak. That's a different proverb. This one says, don't say anything, actually. Just leave it. When words are many, sin isn't absent because you're going to make it, probably you're going to make it worse. Example number two, you're in a business meeting at work. Your boss is speaking down to a colleague or one colleague is bad-mouthing another colleague. It's really impacting the way you work. You can feel you're getting agitated. You're getting anxious. You feel like you need to defend this person.

It's a friend of yours, perhaps. Sorry you're feeling that way. Rather than, yeah, you know, this and that and this and that have you thought of this? Because we normally agree with them and we sort of begin to bad-mouth the person or we go above their defense. Remember last week about gentle words. You've got to don't match their level of intensity. Bring it down. But we find it difficult to do that, especially if we speak a lot. So you're just going to go, hmm. Doesn't sound good.

I was at church once. At church once. And there was a person who was emotionally all over the place. And they walked in. This was years ago. It's not at St. Mark's. And they walked in and I was, and I could, I was, I guess, I was going to say, hey, how are you doing? But I could see that they were just, it was in a bad place. So I said, oh, I was going to ask you how you're doing, but I can see you're not doing well. So I'm just going to leave it for now.

[8 : 56] Well, smiling. It's no problem. Yes. That was the rudest thing I have ever seen anyone ever do. How, how can you speak to people like that? I'm sorry. I don't even know you. This person telling me what they think and giving me their opinion about something they know nothing about. I've known this person for years. I know exactly what they're like. Just leave them until they're ready to talk.

Okay. Do you want to say, Dylan, you shouldn't have said anything at all? Hi. Good to see you. Rather than give my opinion about why I didn't want to speak to them. That would have been better. It would have stopped someone else from sitting.

And then the second part of the proverb tells us to fight hard against speaking. He who holds his tongue is wise. That word hold is restrain. A horse wants to go. Your tongue wants to jump in. You have to bite down on your tongue or bite down on your mouth. And sometimes you have to do that. Sometimes you literally go. And there's the grimace on your face. You're pushing your hands. So here's the thing. Okay. So you want to be wise.

Don't talk. Stop yourself. Restrain your own lips. Hold yourself back. And the thing is, especially when you want to do it. Okay. So when you really feel you want to jump in, that's your cue for not jumping in. I really want to, I really, really have to tell you this right now in the middle of a conversation, interrupting everyone. We're having tea. There's a couple of us there. Jump in and hijack the conversation. I really need to tell you this right now. Okay. That's your cue for, you really

don't need to tell me this right now.

Or anyone. It's your cue to go get a cup of tea and walk outside and look at the moon, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and pray to God for a little bit. So when you're feeling agitated, when you're feeling emotions are running high, when your heart is, race is pulsing, I don't know, you know, when you feel it and you're sweaty and you're clenchy, that's not the time to say something. Okay. Now, again, you've got to be wise about these things. If there's a situation that requires immediate attention, fine, someone's bleeding out in the corner, but I've never really had people who, that situation, they really need to tell me stuff that's really not that important, and instead of helping a situation, they're bringing sin, they're making, they're spreading sin into other people's lives.

[11 : 36] When you feel the need to say something urgently, that's your cue to practice wisdom and say nothing at all. If something is really bugging you and you can't let it go, pray to God first before you go speak to another human being.

Not pray to God immediately and say, yes, okay, I'm going to speak to you now. Go take it to God for three to five days and keep it there until your feelings have subsided. And you know what? It probably won't be an issue. It'll probably be resolved by itself. If it doesn't, hey, bring it up. But speak nicely to people.

By the way, this applies to online conversations. Oh, WhatsApp. Message. Message. Incoming message. Oh, I don't like it.

Hmm. Where's my phone? It's funny, you know, you get the message, it's playing in your heart, and now you're but I'm busy with other things, but somehow my attention is on that message.

It's just... Okay, so no. So you get the message. It's bugging your heart. Proverbs 10 says, don't say anything at all.

[13 : 06] Keep... The person who is wise is going to keep his tongue. You know what? I'm just going to forget about it for a bit. If your phone is keeping on binging, turn it off.

Go for a walk. That doesn't control you. You're under the control of the creator God of the universe. You've got the power to not respond to a WhatsApp.

It takes the power of the creator God of the universe for you to not send a WhatsApp. Just think about that. That's how rubbish we are, living life well. Okay. So in the week ahead, take stock of your conversations.

Could you have spoken later? Could you have spoken less? If the answer is yes, then you know, I should have spoken less. Try and do that next time. Trust in the wisdom of God.

Don't let yourself be a party to sin by speaking a lot of nonsense. Don't bubble over and you must say something. Take it to the Lord. Leave it there. Don't go and speak to the person you feel who needs to know that they've done something wrong.

[14 : 09] I think I might have these verses up. James says this. My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. We are slow to listen, and quick to speak, and therefore quick to become angry.

If you don't want to be angry, don't say anything. Because human anger doesn't produce the righteousness that God desires. Later on he says, those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues, deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

It doesn't mean your whole Christianity is wrecked. It means the way that you serve God isn't working. You can't serve God and just dab and say stuff and talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. Christians are a bit more controlled.

And then later on in James 3, he says this, but the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

[15 : 21] Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Check on your words this week. Have the words you've spoken brought peace or have they brought friction?

If they've brought friction, it's likely that you haven't used the verbs well or wisdom well. Try and use wisdom better and see if you're not creating more peace around you.

Well, let's close our time together by saying this benediction together. Let's do this.

Let me pray first and ask God to help us with doing these things. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word and it's a direct word, Lord.

Where there are many words, sin is never far behind, but the wise person keeps a check on what he says. Lord, we need your help with this.

[16 : 27] It's a small thing, but it's a big thing because you speak about it so often. And our words do have power and they do have impact and you do want us to speak from grace and love and truth.

But with gentleness and awareness. Lord, we need your help with this. Please give us your spirit. Forgive us when we get it wrong and help us to do it better this week ahead. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.