

I. Introduction.

A. The theology of words.

1. God speaks. John 1:1ff Heb. 1:1ff Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14 2:18
2. God reveals Himself in language. II Ti. 3:16-17 Ps. 19:7ff
3. Our speech is in His image.
4. Because of the fall our speech is corrupted. Gen. 3:1ff John 8:33
5. Every time you speak you are either promoting or opposing God's agenda.

B. Words are powerful. 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*

1. Persuasion or seduction. 16:23
2. Edification or destruction. 11:11 *By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.* 13:14

C. Words are limited.

1. They are no substitute for action. 14:23 *In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.* Mt. 21:28-29
2. Words alone cannot change a heart. 29:19 10:13 I Co. 2:14
3. Non-verbal language also "speaks". 6:13 10:10

D. What you say reflects what is in your heart. 15:2,28 10:31,20 16:23 4:23 Mt.12:34ff

1. Speech is perhaps the truest indication whether one is wise or foolish. 15:2 *The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.* Mt. 12:34 *The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.*
2. You will be judged by what you say. Mt. 12:36-37

II. Don't use your speech to destroy. 11:9 *With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor.*

A. Flattery. 29:5 26:28b 6:24 7:21 Ps. 12:3 *A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet.*

1. Flattery is telling people what they want to hear, but for selfish ends.
2. You can be ruined if you pay attention to flatterers.

B. Lies. 26:24-26,28a,18-19 12:17,19,22 14:5,25 6:12,17,19 4:24 30:8a 10:18 17:7 25:18 26:18-19 Eph. 4:26 *Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD*

1. The source of lies is selfishness and hatred. 26:28a *A lying tongue hates those it crushes.*
2. Lying destroys relationships. Eph. 4:26
3. Perjury undermines justice. 19:28a 25:18 12:17 14:5 *A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice...*

C. Gossip and slander. 18:8 25:23 20:19 16:27-28 11:13 17:9 10:18 I Pe. 4:15 Lev. 19:18

1. Because of our depravity, we like gossip. 18:8 *The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, they go down into the innermost parts of the body.*
2. Slander destroys people and relationships. 16:28 *A perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends.*
3. Gossip can be passing on what is true, but not fitting to repeat. 11:13 *He who goes about as a slanderer revels secrets. But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.*
4. When in doubt, remain silent. Ro. 14:23

- D. Angry speech. 11:9,11 Ecc. 7:9 Anger resides in the bosom of fools.**
1. **Anger stems from murderous pride and selfishness. Js. 4:1-2a Mt. 5:21ff**
 2. **Rash verbal outbursts. 29:22 12:18 14:17 15:18 A hot tempered man abounds in transgression...There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword.**
 3. **Hateful words can escalate into violent acts.**
 4. **When is anger righteous? 11:23 Eph. 4:26 Nu. 11:33 Mk. 3:5 Re. 6:16 Js. 1:20**
- E. Quarrels/strife/arguments. 18:6 6:14,19b 30:33 13:10 10:12 17:1,14,19 26:21 3:30**
A fool's lips bring strife and his mouth calls for blows.
1. **Pride and hatred produce fights. 28:25 13:10 10:12 Js. 4:1ff** *An arrogant man stirs up strife... Hatred stirs up strife...*
 2. **Don't be contentious: 26:21 17:19 Ti. 3:10** *Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife... He who loves transgression loves strife.*
- F. Other forms of perverse speech. 2:12**
1. **Filthy speech. 17:20 Eph. 5:3-4** *He who is perverted in his language falls into evil.*
 2. **Plotting evil. 24:2 12:6**
 3. **Boasting. 27:1-2 25:27** *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth...Let another praise you and not your own mouth.*
 4. **Nagging. 19:13 21:9,19 25:24 27:15-16**
 5. **Grumbling. I Co. 10:10 Phil. 2:14**
 6. **Untimely speech. 25:20 26:18-19** *Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar on soda, is he who sings songs to a troubled heart.*
 7. **Hasty speech. 15:28 29:20** *Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*
 8. **Excessive speech. 13:3b 10:19** *The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin... When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable.*
- G. Stay away from those whose speech is ungodly. 17:4 26:20 20:19 22:24,10**
An evildoer listens to wicked lips, A liar pays attention to a destructive tongue...
1. **Refuse to listen to gossip. 20:19** *Do not associate with a gossip...*
 2. **Don't associate with those who are quarrelsome and prone to angry outbursts. 22:24,10** *Do not associate with a man given to anger, or go with a hot tempered man.*
- H. God judges those who misuse their tongues with both temporal consequences and everlasting judgement. 10:31,10-11 18:6-7 19:5,9 6:14b-15 19:19 12:13 26:26 22:12 14:3 Mt. 12:35ff Rev. 22:15** *The perverted tongue will be cut out... A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows... A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul... A false witness will not go unpunished and he who tells lies will not escape.*

III. Learn to speak with excellence.

- A. Exercise self control. 13:3a 21:23 Js. 1:19** *The one who guards his mouth preserves his life.... He who guards his mouth and tongue guards his soul from troubles.*
1. **Think (and listen) before you speak. 15:28 21:23 18:13,17 Js. 1:19** *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things... He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles*
 - a. **Be sure that you know what you are talking about.**
 - b. **Don't jump to conclusions. 18:13** *He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him...*
 2. **Don't talk too much. 10:19 17:28** *He who restrains his lips is wise... Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise...*

3. **Don't lose your temper.** 29:11 15:18b 12:16 14:29 16:32 19:11 Eph. 4:26 Ex. 34:6
A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back...
 - a. **Don't be ruled by your passions.** 12:16 *A fools vexation is known at once.*
 - b. **Be like God Who is slow to anger.** 14:29 16:32 19:11 *He who is slow to anger has great understanding... He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city.*
 - c. **The cure for anger.** Eph. 4:32 Mt. 18:21ff
 4. **Avoid disputes.** 17:14 20:3 26:21 15:18 26:17 19:11 25:8 *The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out.*
 - a. **Do enjoy a good argument?** 20:3 *Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel.*
 - b. **When you are secure in God's love, you don't have to get in the last word.**
 - c. **Stay out of the quarrels of others.** 26:17 *Like one who takes a dog by the ears, is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him.*
 - d. **Arguing with fools and scoffers can be a waste of time.** 23:9 9:7-8
 5. **Don't repeat gossip or slander.** 11:13b 17:9 *He who is trustworthy conceals a matter... He who covers a transgression seeks love.*
 6. **Some things may be true, but are best left unsaid.** Eph. 4:29
- B. Speak with integrity.** 12:17,19 14:5 19:1 14:25 Ps. 15:3-4 *Truthful lips will be established forever... A truthful witness saves lives.*
1. **Keep your word, even if it is costly.** *He swears to his own hurt and does not change.*
 2. **Your motive should not be merely fear of being caught, but fear of God.**
- C. Use your words to build others up.** 16:13
1. **Praise and thanksgiving to God.** Ps. 100:4 111:1 138:1
 2. **Teaching.** 15:7,2 31:26 II Tim. 4:1ff *The lips of the wise spread knowledge.*
 3. **Wise Counsel.** 27:9 *Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.*
 4. **Evangelism.** 11:30 *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. And he who is wise wins souls.*
 5. **Rebuke.** 28:23 17:10 24:25 26:4-5 28:23 27:6 *He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with a tongue... Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.*
 6. **Encouragement.** 12:25 *Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.*
 7. **Deliverance of the oppressed.** 31:8-9 12:6 *Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate.*
 8. **Sometimes it is sinful to remain silent.** 27:5 *Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.*
- D. Develop excellence in the manner of your speech.**
1. **Gentle and calm.** 15:1 25:15 Ro. 12:17-18,21 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger...By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded and a soft tongue breaks the bone*
 2. **Timely.** 15:23 25:11 27:14. *Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken at the right circumstances.*
 3. **Kind speech is more effective.** 16:21 *Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.*
 4. **Draw others out (and listen!).** 20:5 Js. 1:19 Phil. 2:3-4 *A mind in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.*

E. God values and rewards excellent speech. 10:20 20:15 *The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver.*

1. Wise words bless those who hear. 16:24 12:18 10:21 15:4 14:25 *Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul & healing to the bones....*

2. God blesses the speaker. 18:20 12:14 13:2

IV. Concluding applications.

A. Controlling the tongue is a crucial issue in life. Mt. 12:36-37

B. Before your words can be changed, your heart must be transformed. Mt. 12:34-35

C. Jesus exemplifies wise speech. 8:6-7 Jo. 7:38,46 I Pe. 2:23 Heb. 1:1ff Mt. 11:28ff

Discussion questions. (Support your answers with Scripture.)

1. Is it true that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”?

2. What are some ways in which the tongue can be used to destroy?

3. What is the source of sinful speech? Mt. 12:34

4. What is gossip?

5. Why shouldn't we fight and quarrel?

6. Why is it dangerous to talk a lot? 10:19

7. How can listening to people's speech help you to choose your friends?

8. What are some ways that the tongue can be used to build others up?

9. How should you deal with a person who is angry or quarrelsome?

10. How does Jesus Christ exemplify wise speech?