

The Tongue of the Wise

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[0 : 0 0] Well, before I start this morning, it appears that an announcement slipped through the cracks.! So, just a reminder that there is no service here tonight, but you're gathering in your small groups.

And so, I assume you all know where those are and what you need to do for that. So, if you come here, there won't be anybody here except you or maybe a very small group of people who forgot there were small groups tonight.

So, no service here tonight, but small groups instead. It's good to be with you all. Thank you for praying for us. God hears and answers those prayers.

And I'm glad to bring you greetings from Grace Baptist Church in Warsaw, where we pray for you. And thank God for you all. It's a privilege to have the opportunity to exchange pulpits.

I'm glad that Jason is down in Warsaw and that our people get that treat. And I'm glad to have the opportunity here. I'm going to ask you to turn with me in your Bibles to the Old Testament book of Proverbs and chapter 12.

[1 : 0 4] We're making our way through Proverbs down in Warsaw. And so, you'll receive some of the fruit of those labors here, Lord willing, this morning. Proverbs 12.

For the next 40, 45 minutes or so, some of you are hoping for less. But for about that time frame, probably I plan with God's help to preach, to speak words.

Words that convey meaning. But words are more than just simple structural units that make up sentences. They're more than just a conglomeration of letters that have a meaning when you put the letters together in that particular order.

Words, along with the way that we speak them, are much more than that. Now, to illustrate that reality, I'm going to say something this morning that I don't mean, and in a way that I don't mean.

I could have started the sermon this way. I thought it not best to do that, especially as a visiting pastor in a place where some people aren't familiar with me. Most of you are.

[2 : 1 3] But I could have begun the message this way. You despicable people. I can't stand looking at you.

When I come here and preach, I am wasting my time. I didn't even want to drive to Bremen today. That's striking. It's abrasive.

It's unpleasant. And I don't mean that, okay? It's an illustration. So nobody cut the audio from that and said, this is what Pastor Aaron preached. Now, if I had started the sermon that way, like just got up here and went with that, then I probably would have flipped and followed it with something like this, which I do mean.

It is a joy to see your faces today. I thank God for the opportunity to open His Word to you so that we can all engage that Word and grow and benefit from it. I hope it will be an encouragement to those that are discouraged, a challenge to those who are wandering, and good for all of us today.

It's good to be with you. Now, those two statements come across very differently, don't they? You're despicable people, and I'm really glad to see you today. The words that we speak and the way, the manner in which we speak them matter.

[3 : 32] We know that, and the Bible teaches us that. And you might expect that the God who spoke the universe into being and gave us a written Word to reveal Himself, and the Son of God, who is the Word and wisdom of God, and the Holy Spirit, who enables us to understand the Word of God, you might expect that God, the only God.

You might expect Him to have something to say in His Word about our words. And He does. He has a lot to say all throughout the Scriptures about our words, particularly in the book of Proverbs, and that's where we want to focus.

In fact, a good chunk of the Proverbs are given to this subject about our words. And so we want to think about what Proverbs has to teach us about our words this morning.

There's great significance and importance to our words, and I want to see that this morning. So we're going to talk about here the power of words and then winsome words.

Now, down in Warsaw, I had another message to follow that one on wicked words. So we won't be getting... There's some about wicked words along the way this morning, but I want to focus this morning on the power of our words, the impact that they have, and speaking winsome words, good words, appropriate words, words that convey even life itself.

[4 : 58] So let's talk about, first, the power of words. The words that we speak or write or sign, those words have power. So we're in here in Proverbs 12.

Look with me at verse 18. Now, I'm going to go to a bunch of Proverbs today. I've got them in my notes, so I'm not going to turn to all of them. If you want to turn to some of them, great. If you want to just listen and follow along, that's great as well.

I think there's a number of them that you'll find in Proverbs 10, if you want to camp out in one spot. But anyway, we're starting here in Proverbs 12. And notice with me verse 18.

Thinking about the power of our words. There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. That's an incredible statement.

You might be familiar with it. It might just kind of roll off the tongue. You've heard that before, but think about that. The tongue, there's one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

[5 : 57] So think with me this morning about what a sword stab does. What does a sword stab do? Well, it's going to injure you or kill you.

That's what a sword stab is designed to do. The thrust of a sword is aimed to injure or kill you. Your rash, careless, babbling words can be like that thrust of a sword.

It can injure or kill. Your words have power, but on the flip side, the tongue of the wise can bring healing. It's the opposite of injuring someone like a sword does.

The tongue of the wise can bring healing. As I trust we'll see this morning, it can give life. Now, that's the remedy for various ills, can be our words.

This is really overused, but I'm going to use it anyway. The saying, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words or names will never hurt me. That's junk.

[7 : 03] You all know that, right? I'm not sure anyone actually uses that expression anymore except to point out that it's not right. But it's not. You know that by experience.

Which rings more true in your experience? When someone has spoken a harsh word to you that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Does that ring true to you? Or does there's one whose rash words are like sword dust?

Proverbs 12.18, does that ring more true with you? If we're honest, our experience resonates far more with Proverbs 12.18 than a little saying that people use to try to brush off an insult.

Proverbs 18 and verse 21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruits.

Now the second part of that proverb isn't so clear, but the first part is another way of what we've just seen from 12.18. So 18.21, death and life are in the power of the tongue. And that's true both for the one speaking and the one hearing the words.

[8 : 03] You can inflict great harm on others with your words and the way you speak can do damage to yourself. So when you think about words, don't just think about what you say.

Think about those to whom you listen. They can do great damage to you or they can be a great help to you. So who are you going to listen to? Who are you going to put yourself under the influence of?

What sort of friends and acquaintances and what sort of podcast are you going to listen to? What sort of preachers are you going to listen to? What sort of church are you going to attend?

You attend a good one. I know that by experience and by God's grace. I don't mean to have you call into question what you hear in this place. Always guard it and check it against the Word of God.

But be careful about those to whom you listen. They can influence you for bad or good. They can stab you with a sword or they can heal you. So be careful both about how you speak and about those you pay attention to.

[9 : 08] So this is a note about the power of words. We could talk about the value of good words in a similar vein. Proverbs 10 and verse 20, the tongue of the righteous is choice silver.

The heart of the wicked is worth little. And I trust you'll see more of the power and value of our words and our tongues as we go this morning. If you want to do more study on the power of the tongue from the New Testament, read, you got a little time, maybe on a Sunday afternoon, read James 3 this afternoon.

And find out that if you can control your tongue, you can control your whole person. The tongue is a fire and it's set on fire by hell itself. Read James 3. We don't have time to dig into James 3 this morning.

But it's got helpful truth on the power of our words, the power of the tongue. But secondly this morning, let's turn to consider winsome words. How is it, if our words can give life, and that's what we're going to use to talk about, winsome words is what we're summing up, the tongue of the wise can bring healing.

If our words can give life, if death and life are in the power of the tongue, if they can bring healing, how is that? What kind of words do that? And again, the wicked words would be those that are like sword thrust and those that bring death.

[10 : 19] And that's another message for another time. A little bit of that this morning. But focusing this morning on those winsome words that give life that heal. How is that?

Well, it has to do with the amount of words we speak and the manner of our words and the words themselves, the content of them, the amount, the manner, and the content. But before we get into the amount, which is where we will go first, before we get into the amount, the manner, and the content, I want to make sure we're rightly situated.

We're not just talking here about happy words, uplifting words, encouraging words that are divorced from any spiritual Christian reality.

No, there are plenty of people out there encouraging us to say nice things and to use nice words and to speak kindly to one another. And that's well and good, but you don't need to come to church to hear that.

But this is Proverbs. This is, and we've been feeling the weight of that, seeing a whole study in the book of Proverbs, which we haven't done here, but Proverbs is a life, talks about a life rooted in the fear of the Lord.

[11 : 31] The fear of the Lord, in Proverbs is all about wisdom and folly, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. If you want wisdom, and you want to walk in wisdom and live in wisdom, then you need to fear the Lord, which is one of the commentator really helpfully summarizes.

That's a life lived in right relationship to God through Christ. Jesus is the wisdom of God, the New Testament tells us. And so if we are going to walk in wisdom, and we're going to walk in a right relationship, fearing the Lord, worshiping Him, honoring Him, and the things that we say, and the way that we live, we have to be trusting in Christ, who is the wisdom of God.

Trusting in Him to forgive us for all of our foolishness, and to give us grace, to walk and speak in wisdom. So this is a life rooted in the fear of the Lord.

Words that give life for those that reflect the wisdom and light of Christ, as we walk in a relationship with God through Jesus.

You see, the words that we speak flow from the heart. And if our hearts have not been made new by the work of the Holy Spirit giving us faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then all the efforts at nice words in the world won't do us any good.

[12 : 40] And they'll do others no eternal or lasting good. Nice word? Might bring some temporary encouragement or happiness, but a Christ-centered, a Christ-reflecting, a gospel-motivated, a fear-of-the-Lord-induced word of wisdom, that can bring lasting good and joy.

Jesus says in Matthew 12, 34, For out of the abundance of the, what? Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So if you want to speak, win some words. Words that give life. Words that heal. Your heart has to be right. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So I have a lot to say this morning about good, life-giving, careful words. But if your heart isn't right, your words won't be either. And so if you're not trusting in Jesus this morning, just stop right here.

And you need to understand that you need to get right with God. You need to run to Him in repentance and faith and say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner.

[13 : 45] And then you'll have a foundation that you need for good words. But until your heart is right before God, you'll be able to speak some nice words, some good words, but not truly life-giving words.

Words that heal. Words that can bring true comfort and encouragement. So Proverbs 4.23 says, Keep your heart with all vigilance, or watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

And I would say, from it flow the words of life. You want to speak life-giving words, you have to watch over your heart. Words guard your heart as well as your tongue.

And if we're not about that work, our words won't be right. Charles Bridges says, When there is grace in the heart, there will be healing in the tongue. Our words can bring healing, but not unless there's grace in the heart.

So what makes for winsome words flowing from the fear of the Lord? Well, let's talk about their amount and their manner and their content, the words themselves. What about the amount of words?

- [14 : 47] If there is a flood of words, and there's not much thought or content, your words will do little good. And such a person who talks a lot and thinks very little, Proverbs identifies as a fool.

As your words flow, and are full of some of those wicked words, gossip and flattery and slander and lies and babbling, as that happens, you'll see more sword thrusts than you will healing.

A fool who speaks too much will often be hurting others and getting himself into trouble by his words. So, here are a few Proverbs on that. Proverbs 10 and verse 19.

When words are many, transgression is not lacking. But whoever restrains his lips is prudent. Twice in Proverbs 10, we're told, a babbling fool will come to ruin.

It's verse 8 and verse 10 of Proverbs 10. A babbling fool will come to ruin. 1528. The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. You see there's carefulness there, thinking about it.

- [15 : 52] The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. And you see, it's in the heart, thinking about it before it ever comes out of his mouth. But, the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

It just pours out. Far better to speak a few words that are careful and measured and thoughtful.

Those will be, by God's grace, wise, healing words worth listening to. Like we just saw in 1528, the heart of the righteous ponders how to answer.

Proverbs 13, 3. Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life. He who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. See how there's life and death and not just for the one you speak to, but for yourself.

Not just dangerous for others, but for you. The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. Proverbs 21, 23.

- [16 : 54] Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble. You ever seen someone just talk their way into trouble and the more they say, the further in they get and they dig their hole deeper and deeper.

You ever done that yourself? It's a reflection of the wisdom of Proverbs. Solomon anticipated that whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.

So one part of keeping you out of trouble is guarding what comes out of your mouth and we found that to be true. So often, winsome words will be few and careful words. We sum that up with the expression that maybe some of you parents use a lot.

Maybe we should use it for ourselves. Think before you speak. The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. Think before you speak.

Now, the warning against many words does not mean that we should not speak. Rather, that we should not speak carelessly or that we should speak carefully.

- [17 : 59] I don't think we're forbidden from speaking many words. We're called to preach, for example, the Word of God and that takes a number of words on the preacher's part. There's a lot of good books out there that have lots of words in them.

The Word of God, of course, God cannot sin, so that's different, but man, there's a lot of words here nobody's going to say about the Bible. Well, where words are many, transgression is not lacking about Scripture, right?

So, I don't think that many words are absolutely forbidden, but understand the principle that the more words we speak, the more opportunities we have to sin with those words, and it's really, really easy to sin with our words.

So, for example, those like me who use words for a living must be especially careful. This do all of us, but if I stood up here this morning and I spoke one sentence, the Word of God is your only infallible guide for salvation in life.

One sentence. There's a much smaller chance of me sinning by saying that one true sentence than there is when I preach a 45-minute sermon. The more I say, the more you say, the more opportunity we have to sin with speaking with the wrong motive of selfishness or pride or seeking the praise of men or the wrong words, maybe misrepresenting God and His Word or in the wrong manner, browbeating and sinfully angry, kind of like the illustration in the beginning and so on.

[19 : 26] The more that we speak, the more opportunity we have to sin with our words. And so Proverbs warns us about saying too many words and being careful with the words that we do speak.

Being loquacious or talkative or easily able to converse is not necessarily a good thing. And just because your mouth is moving doesn't mean you have something worth saying.

You all know that as well. You've heard people talk and talk and talk and not have anything good to say. I love Charles Bridges at this point. He's a great commentator on different things. But Proverbs is one of them and he says, the fool talks forever upon nothing.

Not because he is full but because he is empty. Not for instruction but for pure love of talking. He's not talking a lot because he has to say. He's talking a lot because he doesn't have anything to say.

He's empty. So if you love the sound of your voice understand that your chattering is showing your foolishness. It's on display for all to see. Your words and the amount of them have something to say about your wisdom and your folly.

[20 : 32] So when we talk about amount really what we're focusing on is the carefulness of our words. The thoughtfulness of our words. So that's one aspect of winsome words. The amount of them.

They will be few. They will be measured. They will be careful. They will be thoughtful words. Second, let's think about the manner. Proverbs has some wisdom for us not just on what we say but on how we say it.

Timing and tone and intent matter. Your body language matters when you speak. Your facial expressions matter when you speak.

I just learned this morning that in ESL you communicate a fair amount of words connectors and I don't know what all else with facial expressions. I didn't know that.

And I learned that this morning. You communicate certain words with your face. That's a pretty remarkable ability to communicate. But you all know that instinctively that our facial expressions communicate.

[21 : 31] They communicate truth. So the manner of our words matter. So the same words said two different ways can mean two totally different things. So you can say to someone I love you.

or you can say I love you. And it means two different things. Right? One of those is identical words.

They convey very different messages. One is genuine. It's heartfelt. The other is contrived. It's being said just because it's expected because someone is waiting for that response. It's not really true.

It doesn't come from the heart. Manner matters. So Proverbs 15.23 To make an apt answer is a joy to a man. And a word in season.

How good it is. It's not just the word itself but the appropriateness of that word. The season in which it is spoken.

[22 : 30] And so somebody's got they are riding high through life. Things are growing great and you come along with an encouraging word for them and they'll probably appreciate it but I'm good man.

But you come alongside someone who is in the depths of despair and in the darkest trial of their life and you come along with that same word of encouragement. It will mean the world to that.

It will have a deep impact on that because of the season in which it's spoken. The timing of it. Proverbs 25.11 and 12.

A word fitly spoken. It's like apples of gold and a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

Our words must be delivered with wisdom. Fitly, appropriately spoken. And that will require you know think if you're you're going to be rebuking someone which are some winsome words that we can speak.

[23 : 28] If you're doing that you've got to know the person. You've got to know the situation the nature of their sin or struggle and the right use of that knowledge. In other words you've got to have wisdom when you speak.

You need Proverbs when you speak. You need the fear of the Lord. We need to speak not only wise words but we need to speak them wisely. Thinking about that situation that context the person themselves and what's going on in their life.

Proverbs 16 verse 21 the wise of heart is called discerning and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. Verses 23 and 24 of Proverbs 16 the heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Gracious words are like a honeycomb. Sweetness to the soul and health to the body. There it is again. Your words can heal in health life to those who hear them.

And I love that. And surely there's something to the content of the words here being spoken. The content can be judicious and sweet and health and persuasive and so on but so must our manner be.

[24 : 38] You can have a very persuasive case to make and state it in a really unpersuasive way. Where people cut you off and they don't even hear you. Gracious words.

Sweetness of words. All sorts of applications here. So gentle words then instead of harsh words. Think about Proverbs 15.1. This is a favorite parenting verse.

Parents like to say it to their children but a lot of times us parents need to apply it to ourselves. A gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger. And we like to apply that when our kids or when siblings are going at each other but man don't I as the parent need that.

A gentle answer or a soft answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger. Charles Bridges describes it as a fire. If the situation is a fire do your words pour water on the fire and calm it down or do they pour oil and gas on the fire and inflame it and cause it to spark?

Do your words when you enter a high tension situation do your words make it worse? Do they ratchet the tension up or do they make it better? Do they ratchet the tension down?

[25 : 50] A soft answer turns away wrath. Harsh word stirs up anger. So you can say exactly the right thing in exactly the wrong way and destroy any effectiveness that your words might have otherwise had.

And I think again of my kids I think of yelling the right thing at my kids in anger. And my manner eviscerates any effectiveness those words might have had. And instead of hearing I spoke the right words but I spoke them in a way that they don't hear the words they learn a wicked way to talk by watching my example.

And I stir up anger in their heart that doesn't make them want to respond to those words but rather entrenches them in their anger and bad behavior and makes them want to reject my words.

Now I said the right thing but I said it in the wrong way. Our manner matters. Paul tells the Ephesians. Fathers don't provoke your children to anger.

I think our harsh answers too often do just that. There are better times than others to speak. When a person's not distracted when you're calm and collected and you've thought carefully about what you want to say.

[27 : 02] Setting up a time with someone to talk with them will be better than broadsiding them with no warning when their mind is nowhere near a place when they're ready to talk about it. A well-reasoned well-timed rebuke will be far better than an off-the-cuff quick-witted cut-down, put-down.

It's really important. A few years ago I was convicted when reading a book called Everyday Talk. That's the title I think, Everyday Talk. It's about how we communicate.

I think largely about parenting, how we communicate in our parenting. And this wasn't even the main point of the book I don't think. But convicted that the way I communicate is crucial and my anger, my bad attitude, my complaining spirit, and impatience, and harsh words all have a detrimental effect on those around me.

Remember, words can be like a sword thrust. Not just like, oh, I did that the wrong way, oh, well, I'll try to do it the right way next time. No, I did that the wrong way and I left a mess in my wake.

I left people bleeding and bruised and broken behind me because of the way I spoke. Do my words stir up anger? Or do they tamp it down?

[28 : 12] Manner matters. But then, so amount matters. Manner matters. Thirdly, with our words, content matters. What exactly are words that give life? Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

The tongue of the wise brings healing. How can we do that? Well, I don't think there's just one answer to the question. So let's look at different answers that Proverbs gives us. And this might be obvious since we're in Proverbs, but it's not just the obvious.

Some of the best words we can speak are words of wisdom. Wise words, which are God's words. Some of the best words that can come out of your mouth are the words of God.

Wise words, the words of Scripture. The best words we can speak are words of wisdom. Those will be good, life-giving words. So Proverbs 15 and verse 7, the lips of the wise spread knowledge, not so the hearts of fools.

And then the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 and verse 26, she opens her mouth with wisdom. And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

[29 : 15] She speaks words of wisdom. And of course, words of wisdom must be words that are soaked in the fear of the Lord and Christ himself since he is the wisdom of God.

As Paul says to the Colossians in Colossians 3.16, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. You want to soak up the word of Christ. And then, what flows out of that?

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all, here's a Proverbs word for you, in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart to God.

Do you want to speak words of wisdom? You know what you need to do? You need to soak up the word of Christ. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and then you'll be able to speak words of wisdom that will be life-giving words.

Proverbs 3.18 is wisdom, speaking of wisdom. It's talking about wisdom. And it says, she is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.

[30 : 16] Those who hold her fast are called blessed. Wisdom is a tree of life. So if we want our words to be life-giving, our words should be words of wisdom.

And they will be a tree of life, which connects us to the Garden of Eden and all the way to paradise and eternity, along with Christ, who is the wisdom of God. If you want to eat of the tree of life, then you must partake of wisdom.

If you want your words to be life-giving, you must partake of wisdom and speak that wisdom. You must have Christ Himself, the wisdom of God.

And it's our words and our manner that must communicate those realities. So Proverbs 15 in verse 4 says, a gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

So a gentle tongue then must be one that speaks wisdom. If wisdom is a tree of life, and a gentle tongue is a tree of life, then a gentle tongue must be gently speaking words of wisdom.

[31 : 15] Words about our Savior Jesus. Gospel words. The best words that we can speak are those that point people to Christ, the wisdom of God, and to point them where they can find eternal life.

Proverbs 11 in verse 30, the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise. If we want to capture souls for Christ, then we must speak wise words that are a tree of life.

May God give us grace to speak good gospel words of life. And you've heard these words. Don't reject them. If you reject the words of wisdom that you hear from this pulpit each day, words of life, gospel words, go out from here all the time.

You reject those. You're rejecting life itself. You won't be able to blame anyone else. It'll be on you for not receiving the truth. So words of life, gospel words, what are the good words we can speak?

We've mentioned this. We can speak words of rebuke. Correction and rebuke are good. Needed words for the sinning and the straying and a faithful friend will deliver them wisely and sweetly.

[32 : 22] Probably not the first thing you think of when you think of winsome words. Good words, rebukes, probably not the first thing that comes to mind, but man, do we need it. Proverbs 15, 31, the ear that listens to life giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

Did you hear how he describes the words of wisdom? Their life, the words of reproof, their life giving. The ear that listens to life giving reproof.

That's not how I describe reproof. That's not how I think about it usually. Proverbs says it's life giving. It's from the perspective of the one listening, but that reproof is valuable, it's precious, it's good, and consistent with what we've seen about the potential power of our words.

I bet you don't think of that, but isn't that part of what God uses to guard and keep us on the narrow way that leads to life? It's what we agree together when we join a church.

We agree to go after the straying sinner. We love you enough to bring you back. That's a life giving word. Words of reproof are good words. Proverbs 28, 23, whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.

[33 : 39] Listen, if I'm sinning and you speak sweet flattery to me, that's ultimately unhelpful. Give me the rebuke. That's a good word.

That's a life giving word. Words of encouragement. Proverbs 12, 25, anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

Friends, these are wonderful words to speak. If you take a second to look around this morning, I guarantee you, you will see somebody who has anxiety in their heart.

You might not know it, but I'm looking at people right now, and if you look around, you'll see people. Go ahead, look around for a second. You'll see somebody that has anxiety in their heart.

They've got burdens. It might be relationship-related. It might be financial. It might be a health concern. It might be a loss. It might be a situation at work, but I guarantee you there's people in this room with anxiety in their heart.

[34 : 45] anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad. So you think about those people that you just looked at.

What good word from you could make their heart glad? It could be a direct quote from Scripture that reminds them of who God is and His promises, like we talked about in Sunday school. It could be an encouragement that you see good in them, that you see growth in them, that you've been observing how God is helping them in this particular area, to deal with this particular sin, and encourage them at the growth that you've seen.

You see God's hand at work in their life and gives them reason for praise and encouragement. It could be a promise to pray for them, or better yet, actually praying for them right there on the spot.

You know you can do that right here. You don't have to be in a quiet room where there's nobody else. It's just two of you standing together. Let's pray right here. And everybody else in the room might not even know it. That's okay. You can pray for them right there.

And if you do promise to pray for someone, make sure you go do it. You can encourage them with that. It could be a gentle reminder of God's presence and power and daily grace sufficient for their daily trouble.

[35 : 58] It's good. If you've received life-giving, encouraging words in your discouragement, you know it's good. Be one who speaks those winsome words. May we have the tongue of the wise to do so.

Isaiah 50 and verse 4. Part of the verse. The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.

That was true of our Savior. By God's grace, it can be true of us as well. So to sum up the content of our good words, maybe this proverb will help us. Proverbs 10, 21.

The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense. the words of the righteous, they're words. ESV translates it feed many.

They're words we could say pasture, like bring to pasture. They feed, they shepherd many. And don't you see the various roles of a shepherd in our ability to speak good words, rebuking words, correcting, bringing back words, encouraging words, joyful words, gospel, life-giving words.

[37 : 06] That's what our tongue should do. The lips of the righteous feed many. They shepherd many. May it be so when we open our mouths. Let's draw a few conclusions here as we close.

Guarding what you say and how you say it will be beneficial in a lot of areas of life. And Charles Bridges identified a few. It gets you thinking about, you know, don't just think about how speaking good words can help you generically.

Bring it home to particular aspects of your life. There's benefits here for when you talk to your spouse and the things that you say at home and the things you say to your children and to your siblings and to your parents and the things that you say at school and the things that you say at work and the things that you say at church.

This has application for any time that you open your mouth and speak. So you think about all of the situations where that happens. When you get up in the morning in your home, you go to work, you go to school, maybe you stay at home, maybe with your neighbors.

There's all sorts of situations all day, every day where we use our mouths, our tongues. Every time we open our mouth it has the potential to give life or to do great damage.

[38 : 23] So take all of these things and bring them these benefits, or there's benefits here that are extensive for our friendships, our family, our other relationships, and our churches.

So we pray, Psalm 141.3, set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. All of us then must be careful in the number, in the manner, in the content of our words.

It doesn't matter if we are preachers, or parents, or pet owners, or employees, or children, or employers, or students, or neighbors, or siblings, or friends, or sports fans, or church members.

We must guard our lips. And before we do that, we must, as we've noted, guard our heart. From it flow the springs of life and words of life. If we want to speak life-giving words, we must guard our hearts and our tongues.

So how do you know? How do you know if you're sort of on track with this, or you're really struggling with this? Well, if your words are frequently getting you in trouble, check the number of them, the thoughtfulness of them, the content of them, the situation in which you speak them, the tone of them.

[39 : 36] Ask others to help you out. Your spouse might have a better perspective on it than you do. A good friend might be able to say, you know what, you think you're hitting the mark when you speak, but let me tell you how people are receiving it, because you don't seem to be seeing it.

Ask someone, and don't make somebody come to you without asking. Say, hey, how do my words land? How do you receive them? How do other people receive them? How do they respond?

Be careful about the thoughtfulness and the content and the manner, situation, the tone of your words, and ask others for their input.

Apply these things not just to your verbal words that are actually spoken out word, but the words that you speak from your device when you text someone or when you post on Facebook.

It's really easy to snap off something snarky from your keyboard that's not face-to-face, somebody else, and say things that you might not ever say in person or in a way that you would never say them in person.

[40 : 37] Apply these things not just to verbal spoken words, but to the words that you type at your computer and on your phone. And watch.

Watch and see. What effect do your words have? Do people walk away from you encouraged, challenged, uplifted, joyful? Or do they walk away beaten down and burdened and angry and hopeless and discouraged and sad?

And evaluate, is it the number of my words? Is it the thoughtlessness or carelessness? Is it the manner? Is it the content? Maybe all three of these that's having this effect. Have a look.

Just like I need to have a look at my own tongue and words that it speaks. If you're not a believer, we've noted this, you won't be able to do what we've talked about because your heart isn't right.

You don't fear the Lord. You come to Christ and you'll find forgiveness for all those wicked words. You're a believer. You come to Christ again and again and find forgiveness for the wicked words that you spoke even this morning before you got to church.

[41 : 40] And you'll find grace to speak rightly. Jim Neuheiser says, before your speech patterns can be changed, your heart must be transformed. Out of the heart, the mouth speaks.

I hope you've seen today that your words matter. May we who fear the Lord be careful by the power of Christ dwelling in us by his spirit to speak his words after him.

And may we have ears to hear his words and to speak them wisdom words, life giving words, and look to him as our only hope for these things.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your life giving word. And we pray that our words would reflect your words. And that we would speak words that give life.

And that we would listen to words that give life. And where our words have been less than winsome and they've been careless and thoughtless and foolish, we pray that you would forgive us. And that you would give us grace to follow our master Jesus who never once sinned with his tongue.

[42 : 39] And we pray that we would speak words that give life and be a blessing to those around us. And we ask it for that one who is the wisdom of God for the sake of Jesus. And we pray in his name.

Amen.