

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/21/92 PM
Proverbs 15:1-4 "How to Get a Handle on Your Tongue"

Intro: The Tongue

Stats: About the tongue (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

I find it interesting that in listing the disorders, there's no mention of the disorders known as gossip, slander, backbiting.

Q: How can I get a handle on my tongue?

Illust: Winston Churchill--Lady told him, "If I were your wife..."

Q: How can I learn to use my tongue in a way that pleases God?

A: Proverbs has much to say to us.

Proverbs: God's Wisdom for Daily Living

How to be Wise. . .

1. In Life--An Introduction (1:1-7)
2. In Developing Friendships (1:10-19; 22:24; 17:17)
3. In Your Marriage Relationship
4. As a Parent (6:1ff)
5. In Your Finances
6. On the Job
7. In Dealing with Temptation (23:26-27)
8. When It Comes to Alcohol (23:28ff)
9. In Handling Your Tongue (15:1-4; 18:4-8)
10. By Being the Man or Woman God Wants You to Be

Note: Role plays at the end to apply the truths we learn...

Amazing Verse: Prov 13:3

13:3 "He that keeps his mouth keeps his life..."

Wow! Did you hear that? If you can control your tongue, your life will fall into place! There's no question that there is a world of potential in your tongue and mine. Constructive potential and destructive potential. You can build up, or tear down, with your tongue. You can lead a person to Christ, or you can give a person cause to never darken church doors again, with your tongue.

Look at the classic passage in the Bible on the tongue. Where?

James 3:2ff "In any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man..."

Paraphrase: "If you can learn to master your tongue, you can master the rest of your life."

Acc to James 3, the tongue is:

--difficult to control (3-4)

--small in size, but great in the damage it can do (5)

--a FIRE, a world of iniquity (6)

--Untamable by man! (8)

Q: What's the point in going on then, if it's impossible to control the tongue?

A: It's impossible for MAN to control it, not for God! God can give us victory in the use of our tongues.

Q: Where does God tell us practically how to tame our tongues?

A: Proverbs--Challenge: Scan the book and write down every reference to the tongue, the mouth, to words.

Our key text tonight will be Pr 15:1-4.

Proposition: According to Proverbs 15:1-4, there is a contrast in what comes out of the mouth of the wise person and what comes out of the mouth of the fool. The contrast is seen in 3 areas of a person's speech.

I. The Tone of Your Words (1)

****HOW** you Speak

A. The Wise--"a soft answer"

B. The Fool--"grievous"

II. The Content of Your Words (2)

****WHAT** you Speak

A. The Wise--"knowledge"

B. The Fool--"foolishness"

III. The Intent of Your Words (4)

****WHY** you Speak

A. The Wise--"wholesome"

B. The Fool--"perverseness"

Challenge: Let's take inventory of our speech tonight.

Note: A "fool" in Prov is not an imbecile, someone lacking mental facilities. A fool is someone who has a moral problem. He tries to live his life without God. In the case of his tongue, he speaks as though God did not exist. He gossips thinking no one is listening, not realizing or caring that God is listening!

I. The Tone of Your Words (1)

The tone = ****HOW** you Speak

We all know that words are powerful. What we say is important. But so is how we say it--the tone in which we speak.

Illust:

Q: How do wise people speak?

A. The Wise--"a soft answer"

V 1 "A soft answer turns away wrath"

NIV--"A gentle answer"

Can do what? "turn away wrath"

Illust: An effective school teacher can calm down a class by soft tones.

25:11 "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

O the power of an encouraging word! True, words can hurt. But they can also heal! A timely word of encouragement can refresh the hearer.

25:13 "...a faithful messenger... refreshes the soul of his masters."

Your tone is key.

25:15 "...a soft tongue breaks the bone" (NIV "a gentle tongue can break a bone")

A wise person speaks in a certain tone. A fool uses the opposite.

B. The Fool--"grievous"

Quote: Washington Irving observed, "The tongue is the only instrument that gets sharper with usage."

V 1 "but grievous words stir up anger"

Note: In the KJV, "words" is plural. Not in the Hebrew.

NIV--"A harsh word stirs up anger." There is great destructive power in one harsh word. One word spoken roughly can do immense damage.

Caution: Using the right tone is not the same thing as being mushy. Proverbs has much to say about flattery. And it's not good! Some people are quite skilled at the art of buttering you up with their words...

27:14 "He that blesses his friend with a loud voice...curse."

20:19 "...meddle not with him that flatters with his lips"

26:28 "...a flattering mouth works ruin."

28:23 "He that rebukes...more favor than he that flatters with his tongue."

29:5 "A man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet."

Illust: Flattery...

What's the point? Flattery is out for the man and woman of God. Having said that, let me ask you a question:

Q: How do you talk to the waitress when you order your meal? I like to watch the way people (esp. pastors) talk to people that "have" to take it, like waitresses and waiters.

Illust: "Give me a Big Mac! Right now!"

Practical Suggestion: Don't yell. Remember, a "soft answer" turns away wrath (15:1). A "gentle word" breaks the bone (25:15).

Listen. There ought to be a contrast between the way you speak and the way your unsaved neighbor speaks. First of all, in the area of the tone of your words. Be polite, courteous.

There's a second area...

II. The Content of Your Words (2)

****WHAT you Speak**

18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

Now we get down to the nitty gritty! What should come out of our mouths?

A. The Wise-- "knowledge"

V 2 "The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright."

NIV "The tongue of the wise commends knowledge."

Do you think before you speak? Do you ponder your words before you let them flow? A wise person does. He speaks knowledge. Not so the fool.

B. The Fool-- "foolishness"

V 2 "but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness"

A wise person thinks, then speaks. A fool speaks, then thinks. The content of a wise person's conversation is beneficial and uplifting. A fool talks about frivolous and idle topics.

10:31-32 "The mouth of the just brings forth wisdom...knows what is acceptable."

Key Observation: Look at Prov 6:16-19.

God hates 7 things. Of the 7 mentioned, 3 have to do with what?

--lying tongue (17)

--a false witness (19)

--he that sows discord among the brethren (19)

Let's talk about one of the great "Christian" sins. It's a sin that has occurred right here in this church building today, no doubt.

10:18 "...he that utters slander is a fool."

10:19a "In the multitude of words there lacks not sin."

18:8 "The words of a talebearer (=whisperer) are as wounds..."

20:19 "He that goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets..."

26:22 "The words of a talebearer are like wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts."

Q: What is gossip?

Swindoll (tape on Prov), "A false or exaggerated report about a person discussed or circulated, based on heresy and not fact."

29:11 "A fool utters all his mind."!!

Two questions:

Q: Do you gossip? Have you circulated anything about anyone this week that you wouldn't say if they were in your presence?

Q: Do you hang around with people who are prone to gossip?

Illust: "I know I shouldn't say this..." Well then, DON'T!

Gossip and slander are deadly sins. God hates them.

Q: How can I overcome gossip and slander?

A: I heard Swindoll suggest we use 4 gates to check our words:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it confidential?
3. Is it kind?
4. Is it necessary?

If it's not all 4, don't say it!

Challenge: Many of us need to be honest with the Lord tonight. We talk too freely. We share things that are not true. We break confidence. We speak words that are cutting instead of kind. We speak words that are unnecessary. In short, we gossip.

What should we do?

1. Admit the problem. Confess it to God.
2. Make a commitment--No more gossiping!
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.
4. Ask a friend to help you. Be accountable.
5. Be willing to change the people you run with, if necessary.

Great verses: 17:27-28

"He that has knowledge spares his words...Even a fool when he holds his peace..."!!

Tran: Do you want to get a handle on your tongue? That involves the Tone, and the Content of your words. Thirdly, look again at Prov 15.

III. The Intent of Your Words (4)

**WHY you Speak

V 4 "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life..."

A. The Wise--"wholesome"

"wholesome" = NIV "brings healing"

We've talked about the negative. Gossiping is out. Some quiet person may be sitting here thinking, "Well I don't have a problem with my tongue. I don't gossip."

You may be right, on one sense. You may not gossip. But let me ask you this, "Do you use your tongue to build others up? Do you look for opportunities to speak a wholesome word? Do you take advantage of those opportunities?"

Key: Gossiping displeases God. So does keeping quiet when we could have used our speech to help someone!

31:8-9 "Open your mouth for the dumb...Plead the cause of the poor and needy."

Illust: "I should have said something but I didn't want to get involved."

Q: When was the last time you used your tongue to encourage someone?

Illust: Your doctor, your S.S. teacher, your paperboy, your boss

Remember, encouraging is not the same as flattering.

12:17 "He that speaks the truth shows forth righteousness."

12:19 "The lip of truth shall last forever."

Q: Have you given anybody a compliment this week? You say, "O they know I appreciate them. So why say it? Besides, I'm quiet!" Listen. The church would be an

even greater place to be if we could learn to express our appreciation for people as well as our criticism.

Illust:

When some people say they want to talk with me, I hold my breath. Do you know why? Because almost always, it seems, I know they want to criticize. Quick to point out problems, slow to express appreciation.

The Intent of our words is key. Why do we say what we say?

B. The Fool--"perverseness"

V 4 "perverseness therein ..." (NIV "a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit")

"perverse"--means somethings that's twisted or false

A fool misleads people with his words. He uses words for his own advantage, not others. He deceives. Why? His intent is to get, to get what he wants.

What are some ways we can use our tongues for the wrong intent?

1. Lying

14:5; 17:4, 7

24:28 "...deceive not with thy lips."

25:18 "A man that bears false witness against his neighbor is a club of war, a sword..."

26:28 "A lying tongue hates those who are afflicted by it..."

2. Mocking

17:5 "Whoso mocks the poor"

3. Degrading

4:24 "Put away...crooked mouth...perverse lips..."

Illust:

Conclusion:

We've taken inventory of our tongues tonight. How'd you do? How is it in the area of the Tone of your words, the Content, and the Intent?

You say, "I've blown it. How can I learn to control my tongue?"

Key: When a man steals, his problem is not his hand, but his what? Heart. He does what he does because of who he is on the inside.

Listen. The key to controlling the tongue is your heart. If I have a tongue problem, it means I really have a heart problem. If your tongue is destructive, it means your heart is infected.

Pr 16:23 "The heart of the wise teaches his mouth..."

Jesus said...

Lk 6:45 "...for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

This is a serious matter.

Mt 12:36-37 "But I say to you that every idle word ... shall give account...."

Q: Have you surrendered your tongue to Jesus Christ?

Role Play: