

INTRODUCTION

Every time we open it up, there is the possibility we will do good or the distinct danger we'll stick our foot in it. I'm talking about **our mouths**.

We're in a series on wisdom. To experience all God has for us, we must grow in this area. Check out this verse:

Prov 16

23. The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.

We have a saying, "**Make sure brain is in gear before engaging mouth.**" And that's true; sometimes the mouth is detached from the brain. But Proverbs says that is never the case with the heart. The mouth is a direct pipeline to what's inside. It is **always attached to our nature. In a very real sense, our words are what we are.**

In dealing with wisdom and the mouth; **there is one great ongoing challenge.** Here is a hint from Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes 3

1. To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:

...

7. ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

The biggest challenge of the mouth is knowing when to open it, and when to shut it.
...So let's start with the first...

DISCUSSION

WHAT REASONS CAUSE YOU TO SPEAK OUT OR TO REMAIN SILENT?

1. PROVERBS SAYS: THERE IS A TIME TO OPEN OUR MOUTHS AND SPEAK.

But when are the wise times? The first seems obvious, but it is the most challenging. It is:

a. Opening the mouth: to say the right thing at the right time

Prov 15

23. A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

What word is spoken? -It might be a word of encouragement, correction, of apology or forgiveness. It could be many things but if the heart is wise, the mouth will say it at just the right time. **We need to remember: Even saying the right thing at the wrong time can be just as damaging as simply saying the wrong thing!**

b. Opening the mouth: to say the right thing in the right way

Proverbs 15

1. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.

This proverb **doesn't even address the issue of a right or wrong answer**. It simply mentions the manner in which it is given. There is some subtlety in the original words:

Gentle (rak) means *tender*. It speaks of an answer from love or kindness. ...On the other hand...

“Harsh words” literally translates as “word of pain”; word (debar) can mean *talk, advice, sentence, even song*. “Pain” (miqtereth) literally means *to fume (like incense or coal)*. The words are **incendiary devices** that will cause smoldering anger.

Wisdom knows; to simply “tell the truth”, or to be “right” means very little, if it is shaped into words that create anger, bitterness, or resentment. There is no life in that. The manner of our response is as important as the substance of our response.

c. Opening the mouth: for the sake of others

Prov 31

8. Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die.

9. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy

What a beautiful illustration that **God's message is the same** from the Old to the New Testaments. The core of the religion remains the same. Fast forward three thousand years from when Solomon wrote these words and read:

James 1

27. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

It is the **same objective, to care for those who cannot care for themselves**. And one way we can do this is **with our mouths**; raising awareness, pleading for justice or equality. -And doing that as the mouthpiece of Christ.

The agency through which we support one of our missionaries, Simon Muhota, sent a second letter of appeal this month. It spoke out on ***forced prostitution in India***. Poor farming families are tricked into releasing their daughters to work in the cities, under the guise of receiving vocational training. What happens is, they are forced into prostitution; some as young as ten years old. In some cases, they are put in 6 by 6 cages where they are given to customer after customer, day after day until they are used up.

Thousands of nameless, faceless, destitute girls; they don't have a chance, unless *someone speaks up for them*. This agency is trying to raise money whereby they rescue them, house them, teach them the Gospel, and give them proper vocational training.

There is a time to open our mouths or bad things happen. -And sometimes, they are inconceivable tragedies. Most often, when the wise mouth speaks, it is *not in self-interest*, but in the *interest of others*. ...Then ...

DISCUSSION

A WISE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT AT THE RIGHT TIME; WHAT SITUATIONS OR FACTORS MAKE IT THE *RIGHT TIME*?

A WISE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT IN THE RIGHT WAY; CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE WHEN SOMEONE COMMUNICATED SOMETHING SENSITIVE IN THE RIGHT WAY?

NAME SOME CAUSES FOR THE NEEDY IN WHICH YOUR CHURCH SHOULD SPEAK OUT.

2. PROVERBS SAYS: THERE IS A TIME TO CLOSE OUR MOUTHS AND REMAIN SILENT

a. Proverbs says: Remain silent from gossip and dissention

Prov 11

12. It is foolish to belittle a neighbor; a person with good sense remains silent.

Sometimes this is difficult when frustration or misguided intentions are involved. But the truth is; ***it is always a losing proposition***. First, you run the risk of hurting yourself if those remarks travel full circle. And it will cause harm to that person. It is certainly wiser to exert a little self-discipline and remain silent.

b. Proverbs says: Be careful in your vows of commitment

Proverbs 6

- 1. My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger,**
- 2. you are snared by the words of your own mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth.**

This goes beyond co-signing for a loan. ***Wise commitments are a fine balance***. If you are not committed to anything, especially in your relationship with Christ; if the extent of what a person does is show up on Sunday once and a while: I simply tell you the truth, according to God's Word; ***that person is in trouble, spiritually***.

That being said, as a servant of Christ you are not meant to commit to every task that comes along. Consider your calling, do the most in it, and commit to the responsibilities all Christians have in common. -But as Christ told us, let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no." It does personal harm and collective harm when a person is reckless in their commitments. ***Be wise before being nice***.

d. Proverbs says: Exercise control of your emotions

Prov 12

16. A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame.

Prov 29

11. A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.

In certain circles of our society, it is considered therapeutic, even admirable to simply ***let loose with whatever you think or feel***. Is that wise?

Scripture says the person who ***thinks that way is a fool***. That's like playing with a loaded gun and shooting it in whatever direction or time suites your whim at the moment. People are going to get hurt, needlessly. ***Words can cause as much harm as bullets***. And at least a surgeon can remove a bullet, words can never be removed.

Once again, there is a ***deeper lesson in the original language***. Proverbs ***isn't telling us to simply hold things inside*** like a pressure cooker. The translation "*holds them back*," is more accurately "***stills his feelings***."

The wise person brings their ***emotions into a healthy balance before opening their mouth***. They take time to get perspective; they give God time to work inside; they act before they react.

The Living Bible puts it like this:

Prov 14

29. A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.

e. Proverbs says: Be silent in areas of exalting yourself

Prov 27

2. Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

A person usually comes off looking much smaller when they talk big about themselves. Avoiding self-praise was a core practice of Christ's ministry. There's lesson in that for those who would follow Him.

DISCUSSION

**THE WISE MOUTH DOESN'T RUSH INTO COMMITMENT;
HOW DO YOU BALANCE THAT VIEW WITH YOUR
CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITIES?**

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE MOUTH

When our nature is in sync with God's nature, it can be surprising, when He tells us to speak out, and when to be silent. But there are a ***few wise constants in every situation***:

- *Whether speaking or remaining silent*; it will be for the ***greater good*** over personal or petty interest.
- *Whether speaking or remaining silent*; it will take ***more courage*** and ***self-discipline*** to do the wise thing.
- *Whether speaking or remaining silent*; the ultimate ***consequences*** of the wise choice will be far more positive than the unwise.

Just quickly, ***what will some of those consequences be?***

Prov 11

9. The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor [friend], but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.

There is a telltale word in the original language here.

The word is “**destroy**” (charbah) means *drought or desolation*. A fool’s mouth has a disastrous affect, not only on their own life, but the lives of his or her friends. Bad advice, misguided thinking, can ***make every life that is influenced, a dry and desolate place.***

-**Another consequence:** In life, it seems what goes around, comes around, doesn’t it? So it’s not so surprising that; ***since the mouth is a main producer of foolishness, it also becomes one of the greatest victims.*** Listen to this hard saying from Proverbs:

Prov 26

7. Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Even words of great value lose all worth when coming from the fool’s mouth. Why? - Because that mouth has ***lost all credibility.*** It has destroyed its own reputation!

Steve told a story that stuck with me, so I share it again. It was his visit to a friend’s house from previous days. And as I understand, this friend fell into some pretty foolish living. So foolish in fact, that even his children had no respect for him.

During Steve’s visit one night, this man tried to be a dad and find out where his teenage daughter was going. He tried to give some fatherly caution. Her response was something to the effect, “*Why should I listen to you? You’re just an old drunk.*” To which he could offer no defense because it was true. His own life was a foolish mess.

Considering the rate of teen pregnancy and delinquency among the children of alcoholics, this dad was probably giving some wise advice. But wise or not, his words fell lame and useless from his mouth.

I try to imagine having a child heading for trouble and all you can do is watch, because you’ve lost all credibility. Even though you know better, foolishness has rendered your words completely powerless. It can happen because it has happened.

DISCUSSION

PROVERBS MENTIONS OTHER FOOLISH PRACTICES WITH WORDS, SUCH AS USING WORDS LIKE A CLUB OR WEAPON (Prov 14:3); SPREADING HATRED AND VIOLENCE (Prov 10: 6, 11), WHAT ARE SOME OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF A FOOLISH MOUTH?

CONCLUSION

One final comparison of mouths that ties it all together:

Prov 10

11. The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

What are your words doing? If you step back and look over the vista of your life, has your mouth, for the most part, been a “**well of life**,” or a **source of turmoil**?

There are consequences from our mouths; our mouths are what we are inside. Your mouth is your heart!

And since that is true, there is ***only one hope of making your mouth a “well of life”***; it is consciously turning your mouth over to the ***Christ who transforms hearts***.

DISCUSSION

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF SOMEONE WHOSE WORDS ARE A “WELL OF LIFE”?