

A: Introduction:

1. Words reveal our character

“The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them” (12:6)

“Evildoers are trapped by their sinful talk” (12:13)

“The talk of fools brings a rod to their backs, but the lips of the wise protect them” (14:3)

2. Words result in consequences

“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone” (25:15)

“Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is one who gives false testimony against a neighbour” (25:18)

“The tongue has the power of life and death” (18:21)

B: Using our words to bring life rather than death:

1. Be Restrained with Words

“When words are many, sin is not absent, but the wise hold their tongues” (10:19)

“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (12:18)

“A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and those who have insight are even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue” (17:27-28)

“The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgement” (10:21)

“A person finds joy in giving an apt reply – and how good is a timely word!” (15:23)

BUZZ GROUPS: In groups, share a time when you have said something that you wished you hadn't said, and explain the consequences and how it got you in to hot water.

2. Be Honest with Words

“A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin” (26:28)

“An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips” (24:26)

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses” (27:5-6)

BUZZ GROUPS: Discuss when you find it hardest to be honest in what you say?

3. Be Loving with Words

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (15:1)

“The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value” (10:20)

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up” (12:25)

BUZZ GROUPS: Discuss whether you feel you are known to be someone who speaks loving words. Is this in all contexts – at work as well as amongst friends?

C: Conclusion:

1. Why are words so important?

2. How can we be more wise in our words?

“Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:33)
“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (James 1:26)

MINISTRY TIME:

Living a Wise Life

Six sessions applying Old Testament Wisdom Literature to 21st Century Living

Week 2: Wisdom about Words (Proverbs 26)

⁴Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

⁵Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

⁶Like cutting off one's feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool.

⁷Like a lame man's legs that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

⁸Like tying a stone in a sling is the giving of honour to a fool.

⁹Like a thornbush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

¹⁷Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.

¹⁸Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows

¹⁹is a man who deceives his neighbour and says, I was only joking! ²⁰Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

²¹As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

²²The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

²³Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart.

²⁴A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbours deceit.

²⁵Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart.

²⁶His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

²⁷If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

²⁸A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.
(Proverbs 26:4-9, 17-28)