

Devotional

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By Major Brian Coles

Solomon's sayings have a lot to say about what we say. In fact, tongue, mouth, lips, and words are mentioned almost 150 times in the book of Proverbs.

Seems to me that any subject mentioned that often calls for our attention.

A key statement about the tongue, is found in Pr. 15.2, which says, *"The tongue of the wise will dispense knowledge, but the mouth of fools will pour out folly."*

This is one of those contrastive couplets. It mentions the wise in contrast to fools. And it's clear that the way they use their tongues, their words, is a dead giveaway of their identity.

You and I know that the root problem is not in the mouth but in the heart, who we are in the core of our being.

Jesus taught that in Lk. 6.45. He said, *"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart,*

and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

Like a bucket draws water from a well, so the tongue dips down, scoops out, and pours out whatever is in the heart.

If the source is clean, that is what the tongue [our words] communicate. If the source is contaminated, that is what the tongue [our words] will communicate.

Using Pr. 15.2 as our key verse, I'd like for us to take a moment to focus on the wrong uses of our tongue. Next time we'll focus on the right uses.

All of us, at some time or another, have struggled with using our tongue, our words, in a wrong way or who have been on the receiving end of another persons hurtful, harmful words.

As you read through the book of Proverbs, you can find at least 5 unhealthy ways of using the tongue.

One is Flattery. Pr. 28.23 says, “He who rebukes a person will afterward find more favour than he who *flatters* with the tongue.”

What is flattery? Flattery is nothing more than insincere compliments expressed with deceitful motives.

It is excessive praise verbalized in hopes of gaining favour in the eyes of another. But as the writer says,

“He who rebukes a person will afterward find *more* favour than he who flatters with the tongue.”

A 2nd unhealthy way of using the tongue is slander and gossip.

Pr. 10.18 says, “... *whoever utters slander is a fool.*” And in 20.19 we read, “*He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip.*”

And what exactly is meant by gossip? It is a false or exaggerated report maliciously discussed and or circulated about a person.

The Lord God reserves some of his harshest words for gossips as he condemns this habit.

A 3rd unhealthy way of using the tongue is in angry words.

Pr. 22.24-25 reads, “*Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.*”

And Pr. 29.22, “*An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.*”

We can have arguments with one another. We can have differing opinions or even disagreement.

Intelligent, open conversation includes freedom of expression, which involves differences of opinions.

But when those differences spill over into angry words, then you've crossed a line that ought not be crossed.

The question is not so much will you disagree, but how you will disagree.

A 4th unhealthy way of using the tongue is by boasting and foolish talk.

As for boasting, Pr. 25.14 reads, *"Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given."*

Sometimes we can shine our own halos in subtle ways because we want to be noticed. We can feed off compliments from others which leads to pride.

Link that with Pr. 6.16-17 which says, *"There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: [and first thing on that list is] haughty eyes,..."*

Haughty eyes are an indication of a prideful spirit so often seen in those who boast.

As for foolish talk ponder Pr. 18.7. *"A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul."*

Foolish talk is not edifying. It is silly, useless and can be foul or profane. And God warns us that the lips of a fool are a snare to his soul.

A verse from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus warns us: *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,*

but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

A 5th unhealthy way of using the tongue is by being verbose.

Pr. 10.19, *"When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise."*

By being verbose I mean talking too much and saying too little. A person who is verbose usually feels compelled to give his or her comment on almost every topic under the sun.

A verbose person is also hard of listening. They feel constrained to fill in segments of a conversation with words without significance. They'll interrupt without hesitation.

I learned a long time ago that I never learned anything while I was talking.
None of us do!

So here are 3 things we can do this week.

1. Think before you speak. If it's not edifying, say nothing.
2. Each morning, look in the mirror, stick out your tongue, have a good look at it, and pray for control.

And 3. Talk less and listen more. You'll be amazed at what you might learn.