



Wise Up! A Series in Proverbs

Speech: A Matter of Life or Death

Date: Sunday 31st July

Speaker: Rachel Binder (City Centre), Becky Stamps (South Site)

Key Verses: Proverbs 18:21 – “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Talk Summary:

Words are powerful: a force for good or evil, wisdom or folly, truth or lies. This is true on a historical scale, but also in our daily lives. We are shaped and impact others through our words, whether spoken, texted or posted on social media. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about our speech.

Listen or Speak?

Listening is essential for gaining wisdom (Proverbs 8:33-35) and the book of Proverbs teaches that those who are wise will show restraint in their words (see Proverbs 18:2, 18:13, 17:27-28, 21:23). Some of us find this particularly challenging! But wisdom is also found in speaking the right words in the right situation. For example, we are to “Speak up” and defend the rights of the oppressed (Proverbs 31:8-9). In the book of Proverbs, the words of the wise are compared to a fountain of life (13:14), precious gold or silver (25:11-12; 10:20), sweet honeycomb (16:24), a loving kiss (24:26) and the foundation of success. The words of the wise are nourishing (10:21), healing (12:18; 15:4) and can deliver from death (13:14).

So the person of wisdom will listen first, then speak with carefully considered words at the right time.

What should I say?

There is a huge contrast between the words of the wise and the words of the foolish in the book of Proverbs. Consider Proverbs 11:9, 11-13 and Proverbs 12:17-19, for example.

Wise	Foolish
Bless & build up people and nations	Tear down & destroy people and nations
Choose silence over judgmental criticism	Ridicules their neighbours
Their careful words heal others	Their reckless words damage others
Keeps confidences	Gossips
Is always truthful	Tells lies

The Bible teaches that we all have issues with our tongue (James 3:2; 6-8) and most of us speak as the wise sometimes, and sometimes as the foolish. There is power in being honest about our failures and asking for forgiveness. The wise person will tell the truth, keep confidences, bless others, speak with gentleness and kindness, and use words that heal instead of hurt.

Finally, **our words reveal our hearts**. See Proverbs 15:7, 16:23 and Luke 6:45. Ultimately what comes out of our mouths reveals what is in our hearts. God created us as His people to be agents of truth, hope and healing in the world, but He is not primarily interested in behaviour change. God is interested in heart change, where His healing, truth and transformation take root in us at the deepest levels, and then come out in our speech and behaviour. When we become aware of issues in our speech, it is an invitation to ask God to reveal and heal anything in our hearts that is coming out in our speech.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- What habits do you have in your life that help you listen well to God/grow in wisdom? If you don't have any, what one would you like to focus on?
- What do you find most challenging in the teaching on speech?
- In the area of speech you find most difficult, has God given you any insight into its root that you can pray over with someone else? Is there a new habit you are hoping to build that you would like prayer for?

- Sometimes untrue words spoken over us in the past hold us back, but God wants to bring freedom, so that we are shaped by what He says about us more than anything else. Has God freed you from untrue words spoken over you in the past? Do you have a testimony about this that you are willing to share?
- What are some of the true things God says in His Word about how He sees us as His children?

Witness - *How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?*

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (go to bvc.so/whats-on for details)