Words

June 7, 2020

*Proverbs 10:19 – “Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.”*

*Proverbs 10:31 – “From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced.”*

Our words are powerful. Words have both the ability to heal and to destroy. What we say can either make someone’s day, or send someone into a downward spiral.

Many have grown up hearing the phrase, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Even though this phrase can be used to deflect hurtful words from someone else, there’s not much truth to it. Words can truly damage another person, and when they are used in this way, it is usually out of selfish pride, inflated ego, or even reflecting personal pain.

In several places throughout Scripture, we are reminded of the power of our words. Proverbs is full of sayings about what comes out of the mouths of both wise and foolish people. In this day and age, we seem encouraged by our culture to open our mouths at whatever chance we get. While it is good to use our voice when necessary, we see in Proverbs 10 that sometimes using more words doesn’t always help. If we use our words to defend sin, those words compound the sin. Sometimes, the more we talk, the more chance we have to get ourselves into trouble.

The book of James also reveals some strong truths about the power of our tongues. In this letter, James warns Christians about the dangers of being inconsistent – of saying one thing and doing another. He also reminds readers that our words can be inconsistent too, and says in verse 10, “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”

It is important to speak, especially when you are using your words to love others, honor God, and defend those who cannot defend themselves. However, these verses caution us to be cautious when we use our words. The more you say, the greater chance you have of being inconsistent. The more you use your tongue, the greater chance you could say something damaging to yourself or to someone else.

This is not a warning to keep silent! Don’t forget that words have power to heal as well. You can use your words to speak life into someone else! But I echo the writings of James and Proverbs – use your words to honor Christ, because what you say reveals a lot about who you claim to be. If you aim to follow Jesus in all you say and do, the words that come from your mouth will be the fruit of wisdom, fruit that can nourish others, fruit that will be pleasing to consume.

*Questions for Reflection and Discussion*

1. What’s your least favorite word? A lot of people hate the word “moist” – ew. Are there any words you just don’t like how they sound?
2. Have you ever had someone say nasty things about you? Either behind your back or to your face? How did that make you feel? Have you ever said hurtful words yourself? How did that feel?
3. Have you ever had someone say nice things about you? How did that make you feel? How does saying nice words to another person feel to you?
4. Read James 3:1-12. Why do you think the tongue is so powerful and dangerous? Have you ever known someone who has said one thing and acted in a different way?
5. When do you think it is appropriate to speak up and use your words? When is it a good idea to “hold your tongue”?
6. What dangers do you think social media presents to our culture, especially when it comes to using words?
7. How can you use your words this week to speak life into someone else?