**Two Ears, One Mouth**

**Small Group Discussion**

**Proverbs**

**Opening question**:

* Who do you know who is really good with their words –whose speech is gracious, wise, encouraging etc.? How do you think they became that way?

We are in our 2nd of six weeks studying wisdom as defined and explained in Scripture. In this past Sunday’s sermon, Pastor Josh showed us three insights that will shape our use of words. With this in mind, **TAKE TURNS READING PROVERBS 12:6, 13-18:**

The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them…. (13) Evildoers are trapped by their sinful talk, and so the innocent escape trouble. 14 From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward…. (17) An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies. 18 *The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing*.

1. What contrast in the use of words do you see in v18? Pastor Josh’s first insight from Proverbs is that “**your words are powerful**.” Below are some verses that show how words can be used powerfully for good.
	1. Proverbs 15:1-2. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.
		1. In the first half of this verse, how do gentle words in a conflict have power for good? Have you recently seen an example of this principle play out?
		2. In the second half of this verse, how does speaking knowledge over ignorance have power for good?
		3. Can you think of someone who could benefit from some uplifting words from you?
	2. Proverbs 15:23 and 26, where we see two more characteristics of speech that has power for good: “A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word! ... The Lord detests the thoughts of the wicked, but gracious words are pure in his sight.”
		1. What do you think is meant by a “timely word”? How does a timely word have power for good?
		2. Define “gracious words.” How do they have power for good?
		3. There are numerous passages in Proverbs that encourage us to be truthful. Does this only mean not telling an outright lie, or is there more? How do these types of words have power for good?
2. Words can be just as powerful in destructive ways.
	1. Give examples of ways in which words can be destructive.
	2. Why aren’t people more careful with their words?
3. Pastor Josh’s second insight about our words in Proverbs is that **“because words are so powerful, wise people listen more and speak less.”**
	1. What does Proverbs say about the fate and nature of one who does not watch their words (see Proverbs 10:19, 12:13, 13:3, 21:23, 29:20; James 1:19)?
	2. Where do you think that you currently fall on the spectrum below?

🡨-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------🡪

*I need to speak more I speak an appropriate amount I need to speak less*

* 1. Josh quoted Duane Garrett:

Sometimes the book of Proverbs seems to value nothing so much as appropriate words. This is because it views words as the index to the soul. By paying attention to what a person says (and indeed to how much he or she says), one can determine whether a person is wise or a fool. Words are the fruit that show the quality of the heart.

QUESTION: What is your first emotional reaction to hearing that “words are the fruit that show the quality of the heart”?

1. Josh’s third insight about words from Proverbs was that “**What comes from your mouth comes from your heart**.”
	1. Let’s review ways we can go wrong with speech: talking too much, not listening enough, destructive words, ungracious words, unwise words, ill-timed words, discouraging words. Anything else?
	2. Now, let’s be honest with each other: What does the nature of your speech and ability to listen say about your heart? Is there any deep insecurity that these patterns reveal?
	3. In addition, if you have a problem in any outward area of behavior, we can always trace it back to something going on in your heart. James says it this way, in Ch. 3:

**10**Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. **11**Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? **12**My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

QUESTION: This may be a stretch to share with each other, but is there any outward behavior right now that might be reflective of something negative going on in your heart? If so, how can we pray for and support you in this?

1. The Bible proposes a solution to our speech problem. We need a new heart. And, only God can give us that new heart. We could see it in numerous places, but perhaps the clearest is the prophet Ezekiel, 36:25-27. God says this:
**25**I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. **26**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. **27**And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
	1. What is your first reaction to hearing that God gave you a new heart and new spirit when you received Jesus?
	2. Is this “new heart” affecting the way or amount that you speak? How might it?
	3. Romans 8:16 might provide this answer to how to live in the reality of a new heart. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” How does the Holy Spirit “testify” that we are God’s children? How does this affect the way or amount that we speak?
	4. Read John 1:1-5, and note what John calls Jesus in this paragraph. Do you think that this fact has any bearing on the way that we speak?
2. **Share and Pray:** Among our usual prayer requests, let’s pray that God will help us seek to listen more and seek to honor him more with our speech with the help of the Holy Spirit.