

**TOPICAL STUDY OF PROVERBS
CLASS NOTES, SPRING QUARTER
MARCH-MAY 2017
AUDITORIUM CLASS
CASSEL HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST**

LESSON THREE. USE OF THE TONGUE: Proverbs 10:19, 13:3 and 17:27-28; 12:18, 15:28, and 29:20; 24:26 and 25:11; 11:13, 20:19, and 26:20; 27:5-6, 28:23 and 29:5; 15:1 and 25:15.

INTRODUCTION

This morning's lesson is on the proper use of the tongue. Speaking of correct communication, it reminds me of the story of the man who pulled into a crowded parking lot and rolled down the car windows to make sure his Labrador Retriever had fresh air. She was stretched out on the back seat, and he wanted to impress upon her that she must remain there. He walked to the curb backward, pointing his finger at the car and saying emphatically, "Now you stay. Do you hear me? Stay!" The driver of a nearby car gave him a startled look. "I don't know about you, " he said incredulously. "But I usually just put my car in park."

1. There are probably more proverbs on the use of the tongue than any other subject, so I had to drastically weed out a lot of proverbs for this lesson. As it is, we will probably have to take two Sundays to cover the material. **Proverbs 18:20-21** tells us: **“With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; He will be satisfied with the product of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”** (READ) The mental image that is presented here is one's speech is like fruit that the speaker will eat...good and wholesome or bad and rotten. You've heard the saying “eat my words”, as in “I guess I'll have to eat my words”...which means to suffer the embarrassment of not being correct in what one said; to retract what one has said, especially in a humiliated way. I'm sure that both Clinton and Trump were thinking during the campaign "my opponent will eat their words when I get elected".

2. **James** in his book, chapter **3:2-12**, picks up on this theme but concentrates on what harm can be done by the tongue. **In verse 8, James writes “But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison”.** (READ) However, we can minimize the damage that we inevitably will cause if we follow the advice of Solomon and the other wise authors of Proverbs.

3. The proverbs that I have listed on the outline are what I hope to discuss this morning,

time permitting. Like I said earlier, we'll probably have to finish up next Sunday. I prepared thirteen lessons for this series on the book of Proverbs, but it doesn't mean that we will spend only one week on each topic. That is my privilege to decide, as the teacher. Look at the list of proverbs listed for today's study. Similar proverbs are listed by a comma and concluded by the word "and". The semicolon separates different subtopics within the overall lesson. Discuss, using above verses. I've listed the relevant proverbs for each lesson, so be sure to at least read these proverbs before class each week.

2. **Proverbs 10:19, 13:3 and 17:27-28. (READ)** Restraining our lips. See also **Psalm 141:3; Ecclesiastes 3:7, and James 1:19**. These proverbs teach that endless chatter is not recommended. Wisdom often has two parts: (1) having a lot to say 2) not saying it.

1. That reminds me of the story of the little boy who got into trouble with his grandma because he hadn't learned to restrain his lips and not chatter so much. His grandmother was standing in the kitchen, chatting with her tall, slim daughter (the little boy's mother), when her grandson came into the room. "Grandma," he said, "Mommy is much taller than you!" Well, his grandmother looked her daughter up and down and then said with mock sadness, "Yes, she is, isn't she?" "But don't worry, Grandma" the little boy replied, after a sympathetic pause, "you're much wider." So, learn to talk less and you're not get yourself into so much trouble.

Why is it so hard for us to restrain our lips...to keep silent? Possible reasons: (a) pride--some people are know-it-alls and always have to comment, (b) insecurity: they must defend their own self esteem by saying something, (c) some are embarrassed by silence, so they fill the vacuum with noise. Abraham Lincoln is purported to have said "It is better to keep your mouth shut and thought a fool, than to open it and remove all doubt." Lincoln was a student of the Bible, so he may very well have been thinking of Proverbs 17:28 when he said this. But, whether or not Lincoln actually said it...it is excellent advice!

Can you think of some examples when Christ was silent? (a) John 8:1-11 is the account of the woman caught in adultery. Jesus initially was silent in response to the scribes and Pharisees. He spoke only when he was pressed. (b) John 19:7-11. Again, Jesus initially gave no reply to Pilate's question and answered only when he wanted to make a point (v. 11). Reminds us of **Isaiah 53:7: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth: Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.**

3. **Proverbs 12:18, 15:28, and 29:20 (READ)** Think before you speak.

1. A woman's marriage brought with it four adult stepchildren – only one of which she

had met before the wedding—but it also brought a cat. Soon after the honeymoon, they invited the children to their house for a 'get-to-know-you' dinner. The woman was exceedingly nervous, and wanted to impress the kids with her ability to take care of their father and his cat. Their house was neat and tidy, and she had cooked a lovely roast beef dinner. They greeted the kids with hugs, but they paid as much attention to the cat as to their new step-mother. Wanting them to know her regard for the cat, she blurted out, "I've never lived with an animal before I met and married your father."

Have you ever said something—without really thinking first—and then later regretted it? I'm sure that the candidates in the latest presidential race have both done this. Probably the most famous Bible character who was guilty of this was the judge Jephthah in **Judges 11:30-35**. Herod was also guilty of this, as depicted in **Mark 6:23-28**. I know that Bill Cosby has fallen into disapproval, but he told a story once that demonstrates the point of not speaking before thinking. Bill Cosby tells the story that, after he heard Ray Charles play in concert, the musician asked him whether or not he'd like to come back to his room. Of course, he would! Ray Charles went on in ahead of Bill Cosby, and the place was pitch black. However, Bill followed the sound of Ray's voice, until he entered his bathroom. Then Bill's eyes adjusted to the dark just enough for me to realize he was shaving! Do you know how it is when you don't really mean to say something out loud, but the words just come out anyway? Well, that's what happened. Bill said, "Ray, why are you shaving in the dark?" Ray said, "Turn on the light." Bill did. Then Ray asked Bill, "Feel better now?" Tell of you, during the first lesson, asking "Can anyone not hear me?" Duh!

4. **Proverbs 24:26 and 25:11 (READ)** Saying the right words.

1. That reminds me of the man who was sitting on his front stoop staring sadly at the ground when his neighbor strolls over. The neighbor tries to start a conversation several times, but the older man barely responds. Finally, the neighbor asks what the problem is. "Well," the man says, "I ran afoul of my wife because of one of those questions women ask. Now I'm in the dog house." "What kind of question?" the neighbor asked. "My wife asked me if I would still love her when she was old, fat and ugly." "That's easy," says the neighbor. "You just say, 'Of course I will.'" "Yeah," says the other man, "that's what I meant to say. But what came out was, 'Of course I do.'"

2. Saying the right words at just the right time is a learned trait. It's something that we have to learn how to do. Paul writes to the **Ephesians in chapter 4:29** "**Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.** Earlier, in **chapter 4:15** he told them that they were to "**speak the truth in love**". And then he wrote to the **Colossians in chapter 4:6** "**Let your speech always**

be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person. This is knowledge that we continue to grow in as we mature in Christ.

Does anyone have an example of someone saying something right or wrong when the right words were needed? Tell when Lundy encouraged you to be an elder.

The story is told of a couple's first child. Since the mother was asleep under general anesthesia, due to the birth being Cesarean, the nurse took the tiny charge directly to the newborn nursery to introduce him to his daddy. While cuddling his son for the first time, he noticed the baby's ears conspicuously standing out from his head. He expressed his concern that some kids might call his son names like "Dumbo." The pediatrician reassured the new dad that his son was healthy and the ears could be easily corrected during childhood. The father still worried about his wife's reaction to those large protruding ears. "She doesn't take things as easily as I do," he worried. By this time, the new mother was ready to meet her precious son. The father placed the tiny bundle in his mother's arms and eased the blanket back so that she could gaze upon her child for the first time. She took one look at her baby's face and looked to her husband and gasped, "Oh, Honey! Look! He has your ears!"

5. Proverbs 11:13, 20:19 and 26:20 (READ) A gossip is a person who spreads rumors or idle, fruitless tales. By idle, I mean not having any good reason, cause or foundation. Gossiping is a sin that should never be committed by a Christian. Several New Testament verses warn against gossiping: **Matthew 12:36, I Timothy 3:11, II Timothy 3:1-5, Titus 2:3.**

Why do people enjoy gossiping about others? Because it makes them feel superior and self righteous. Because they want to harm someone's reputation.

6. Proverbs 27:5-6, 28:23 and 29:5 (READ) Words of correction and rebuke. Needs to be done in the right way.

1. A man once stated "People are forever calling me a hypochondriac, and, let me tell you, that makes me sick".

2. An earlier quoted verse is applicable here: **Ephesians 4:15.** Need to be said with the person's best interests in mind; not to put them in their place or with a holier than thou attitude. **Romans 15:14: "And concerning you, My brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another."** Admonish means to advise or counsel someone about their faults in order to help the person improve or become better. According to **II Timothy 3:15-16,** the scriptures enable us to do that.

What are your thoughts about how and when Christians should counsel or admonish one another? First, get your facts straight. Particularly if not a witness of the sin committed. **Proverbs 25:8-10**. In most cases, privately. **Matthew 18:15-17**, but sometimes publicly **I Timothy 5:19-20**. In love. **Ephesians 4:15**.

7. **Proverbs 15:1 and 25:15 (READ)** Answer softly when confronted with anger or opposition.

Here either tell or read the story of Naaman in II Kings 5 and emphasize how Naaman's servants quieted his anger by calmly requesting that he do what Elisha said to do (verse 13).

Why do you think that a soft answer has a calming effect?