

# The Wise Use of Words (Part 2)

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Date: 12 February 2017

[ 0 : 00 ] If someone asks you, what are some precious jewels? What would come to your mind? What would you put on your list?

Maybe a diamond, emerald, ruby? Some of you may have such a list with Valentine's Day coming up. I don't know. Well, according to Proverbs, we could put wise words on that list of precious jewels.

Because the book of Proverbs compares wise words, knowledgeable words, words of understanding with precious jewels.

Look at it. Chapter 20, verse 15. There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

Raymond Ortlund says that last phrase, the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel, means that knowledgeable, informed, intelligent words are rare and valuable in God's eyes.

[ 1 : 15 ] He then points out that we understand the value of wise speech. Look what he says. We know what it's like to be listening to someone, and it's obvious they do not know what they're talking about.

We also know what it's like to fall silent whenever a certain person speaks, because whatever that person has to say is wise and helpful and almost a work of art.

You know what he's talking about. Think about one of the last big family reunions you went to, or maybe a large work-related gathering.

Think about one of the last big family reunions you went to, weren't there several people that you just hoped you didn't get stuck having to have a conversation with?

I mean, you knew that they were going to talk about a lot of things that they really didn't know what they were talking about. You know people that they like to talk a lot, but they just don't say much.

[ 2 : 31 ] But in that gathering, there was one person, maybe two, that you wanted. You were going to make sure you got to spend some time with them.

Not so much because you had things to say, but because you wanted to listen to what they had to say. Because you value what they think.

You recognize that that person is wise, is helpful. You benefit, other people benefit from what they have to say.

We know from experience that knowledgeable, wise, and helpful speech really is a precious jewel because of its value and it's in short supply.

Well, Proverbs has much to say about our speech as we are learning. We shifted gears from the negative to the positive last week and started looking at the good use of words, the value of wise speech.

[ 3 : 43 ] Last week we focused on the value of speaking truthfully, appropriately, timely, calmly, and then speaking less.

Well, I want us to continue this line of thinking by looking at how a wise person uses words to encourage. A wise person understands the value of words of encouragement.

Now, the book of Proverbs describes this idea of speaking encouraging words in a rich variety of ways and I want to bring out three of them.

I want us to look at three statements. First, from Proverbs 10. Look at it. The lips of the righteous feed many. The word feed is translated nourish in the NIV, encourage in the New Living translation, in some passages, this word, nourish, encourage, feed, is translated to shepherd as in shepherding, taking care of sheep.

This verse is saying that encouraging words are words that provide what we might call emotional or spiritual nourishment, comfort, comfort, guidance, even security, protection.

[ 5 : 19 ] Look at the second verse in Proverbs 12. Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

The word anxiety in this verse is referring to fear, maybe fear of the unknown about the future. It's talking about worry. Several commentators in trying to describe what it's talking about use the word depression in describing the extent of the fear or anxiety.

The idea is that when we are really anxious about something, it can weigh us down. It can give us an emotionally heavy heart.

And you know that's especially true about depression. All of us, to some degree, most of us, in small degrees, we have experienced times of depression.

Well, what is helpful in such a situation is described in this verse as a good word. A good word that makes a person glad, that cheers him up.

[ 6 : 35 ] And so, from this perspective, this verse, encouraging words could be any kind of good words that provide an emotional or spiritual lift to a person that's down.

Encouraging words could be words that just sort of pick someone up who's down. Let's look at the third from Proverbs 16.

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the body. Now, both the NIV and the New American Standard translation, they translate the second part of that verse more literally like this, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

They're describing the power of words figuratively to heal bones. Now, let's note two things about the effect that gracious words can have on an individual who receives them.

they can have a sweet taste. They have a pleasantness to them when we hear them. They're sweet to the soul. And they have a healing touch.

[ 7 : 56 ] Healing to the bones is the way the writer describes it. So, encouraging words we're talking about. There are all kinds of words.

But they can be any kind of gracious words that are just pleasant. They bring healing to emotional or spiritual wounds.

Now, let's try to apply this now. We see from these three verses, there's just all kinds of words we can use to encourage another person.

There's all kinds of ways we can use words wisely, helpfully, to pick people up when they need it. What all three verses have in common is that they provide emotional, spiritual, and or physical support according to the person's need.

But in order for us to be able to wisely encourage the person that God's brought into our lives, we've got to take an interest in them.

[ 9 : 15 ] We've got to notice them. We've got to pay attention to them. We've got to try to find out what their needs are.

So, here's where we're going to pause. How well and how often do you do that? I want you to think about the people who are closest to you.

You know, as we go through any kind of study on Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, whenever, as you go through your own personal Bible study, try to apply it where you are to how your life is.

Don't think in generalities. right now, we're talking about the wisdom of using our words to encourage people.

We're talking about encouraging speech. And there's a lot of different ways we can do that. But here's what I want you to do. Think about the people that you are the closest to.

[ 10 : 17 ] The people that God has in your life, in your family, among your friends, people you work with, go to school with. Do you know how those closest to you need to be encouraged right now, today, based on what you know is going on in their life?

Think about it in light of what we've seen in those verses. Is there someone around you right now who is in need of your shepherding words, of comfort maybe?

Or they need you to sort of provide some guidance. Or it may be there's fear and they need words that will convey security.

Or maybe you need to help them in applying God's word in a way that will nourish them spiritually. right now, is there anyone close to you that's allowed stress or fear to weigh them down?

They've got a heavy heart. It may be that hearing encouraging words of affirmation from you, it may be that your loving words of concern is what will pick them up quicker than anything else could.

[ 11 : 57 ] The third application for that third verse, is there anyone in your life that maybe has a wounded spirit? Maybe as a result of some things that you have said or done to them, it may be that what they need is to hear from your lips some heartfelt, sincere encouragement.

Words that will lift them up. Words that will give them hope. Words that God will use to meet that real need that they're struggling with right now.

Or could it be that there's just some people in your life that they just need to hear you speak some pleasant words for a change?

Let's be real honest. Most of us need to put forth more effort to notice what's going on in the lives of the people around us.

You don't need to worry about the stranger on the street. You don't need to be concerned at all about the so called celebrities that are all over the news on the internet and on TV.

[ 13 : 25 ] What they do and what they think matters zero. What they think and what they're doing is a negative number in terms of what matters in your life, in my life, and in the world that really is.

But the people that you live with, the people you go to school with, people you work with, people that you worship the Lord with right here in this church family, we need to ask God to help us to develop a real desire to know what's going on in their life so that we can encourage them.

And we need to ask God to help us to develop the habit of not just thinking about being an encourager, but actually speaking words that heal, that give hope, that lift up, that comfort, that just plain encourage in some way.

Now, not only do people around us need it, but we do too, don't we? Or you might say, I don't need that.

I don't like criticism, but as long as people don't criticize me, I don't really need all that encouraging, fluffy stuff. You're lying. You're a human being.

[ 14 : 57 ] Encouraging words can lift you. they can do something to you that nothing else can do. You like it.

You enjoy it because it meets a need that we all have as a human being. We need to be encouraged.

Now, I want you to look again at that last Proverbs 16, 24. Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul, and health to the body.

Why would that not also apply to the godly person who speaks the words as well as the person on the receiving end?

it helps us. It's beneficial to us. It's sweet. It's pleasant to us, for us, to speak such words.

[ 16 : 05 ] We need to do it. And people in our lives need to hear it. Starting today, and I want you to make a commitment for every day this week, look for opportunities in the lives of those special people who are in your life.

Look for opportunities. Look for needs for you to speak encouraging words to them.

I mean, make it a commitment. Starting today, you're going to start looking. What are some needs that an encouraging word for me could meet?

Legitimately. Pick out specific people that you know, maybe in your home that especially need it right now, or somebody you work with or go into school with, or somebody in your Sunday school class.

Make it a point. Speak, need specific words of encouragement to them. We need to ask God to help us to be wise with our words.

[ 17 : 15 ] words. We need to ask God to help us to be wise with our words every day in all kinds of ways for sure. But we need help. We need reminders to be an encourager every day.

Now, since we've looked at the importance of discovering people's needs in order to know how to encourage them, I think it's important that we sort of take a detour from the next point about wisely using our words, let's think about this.

A wise person knows that sometimes words are not enough. You see, as I was preparing this week and got to thinking about how important it is to be an encourager, to offer encouraging words to the people we are closest to especially, I also got to thinking, in a lot of situations, words are important but words are not enough.

There are times when words alone fail to meet the need at hand. And Proverbs clearly illustrates this by comparing the person who is willing to work with the person who only wants to talk.

Look at it from Proverbs 14. All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

[ 18 : 48 ] Now remember, Proverbs are just general rules of life. This is how life normally works. And generally speaking, the farmer, the business person that would be in mind here, the person who is willing to work hard, it's going to be to their advantage.

They're going to be able to take care of themselves. It is profitable to work hard in this world. That's just a basic way God created life to work. If you work hard normally, it's to your advantage.

It is profitable. But people who just talk a good game, who just talk about what they're going to do, but never do it, they're going to come up short.

They're going to be needy, sometimes even in poverty, literally. The ESV study Bible says this verse is a rebuke against people who are always talking and planning, but never accomplishing anything.

You know, it is good to plan and to think. It's even good to dream and have goals.

[ 20 : 06 ] But there comes a time when it's time to quit thinking about this. It's time to quit looking at all the plans. It's time to stop talking about it. It's time to do something.

There comes a time when there's nothing more to be said. And we've just got to do. food. That's what he's talking about.

Now, to put this another way, there are times when even our well-meaning, encouraging words are absolutely no substitute for action.

In fact, they're just an excuse. I want you to look at what James, the wisdom writer of the New Testament, says about this very thing we're looking at. From James chapter 2. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

James is trying to teach in this section that faith without works is meaningless. If your life doesn't back up your profession of faith, your profession of faith is meaningless.

[ 21 : 24 ] And so he compares it here. Words of compassion without acts of compassion are meaningless. We need to let this sink in.

Some of the people that we do need to encourage with our words, they need to experience from us encouraging actions.

Some of the people in some of the situations that you thought about a moment ago, some of the people close to you, who have needs that you're aware of, that need your encouragement, your encouraging words, some of them need for you to go another step and show some encouraging actions as well.

Because if you don't, your words are not going to bring about the needed change that they need and you really want them to experience. Now, think with me.

What are some of the things that people in your life who you care about, you want to meet their needs, what is it that they need beside your encouraging words?

[ 22 : 50 ] Well, just because of the day in which we live, knowing how life can be, I know that there are some people in your life that in addition to your words, they need time.

They need face time with you. I'm talking about in person, eye to eye. They need your attention. They need to know that you care enough to sit down and be with them.

Look into their eyes. Listen. Really listen to what they have to say. Some people in your life really need it because they rarely have it.

And it may not be that there are people in your life who need your attention. It may not be that you're just never there. The problem is, when you are there, you aren't there.

If you think spending time with people, with most of the time your face is stuck in an iPhone, or you're preoccupied with your iPad, or listening to the radio, got your earphones on, or you got to watch TV, B, or B, what you think is multitasking, you're not giving people the time, the attention.

[ 24 : 18 ] You're not giving people the you that they really need. I want you to look at this familiar picture on the screen. That particular picture is not one you've seen, but you've seen one like it.

Lisa and I were in Pigeon Forge last fall. We're at a restaurant. This is in the morning. Those are teenagers, older teenagers. They're not looking at a menu.

Each one has their face in that iPad, iPhone. They made no eye contact. They carried on no conversation. When the food came, they moved their phone over to put the plate there, and they ate and watched that.

They didn't talk to one another. But even worse, one night on that same trip, Lisa and I went out to eat.

Now, I was sitting here, and Lisa was there, and over here, it was just in my eye contact view. There was a lady about my age who appeared to be with her mother.

[ 25 : 30 ] And the lady my age, I am not exaggerating, she caught my attention, and all she did for the time she gave her order, I guess, until the food came, all she did was look down and do something with her iPhone.

She didn't look at her mother, she didn't talk to her mother, she didn't listen to her mother, because mother didn't talk. She just fooled with that phone. And her mother, sitting across the table, sitting up with her hands on the table, just sort of staring at her daughter, sort of pleasant looking, but no kind of interaction.

And I thought about that, and I told Lisa about that. They're supposed to be out spending time together, but they didn't spend any time together.

There were a few points where I did note that the woman my age with her phone said a few words to her mother, obviously, about what she was doing on that phone, what she was looking at, but her mother didn't care a thing in the world about it.

Technology is a wonderful thing. I use it every day. I enjoy technology. But I want you to understand something. A lot of people in this room, you are allowing such technology to destroy personal relationships with people that I know you really and do care about, you love.

[ 27 : 18 ] Some of you parents are allowing your teenagers or even younger to develop those kind of habits and inability to communicate by always having that before their face as if you don't exist.

And the dumbest thing of all is you pay for it. I've got two boys that you know and you can ask. If you pay for it, it's yours.

You just let them use it. And you're the one that needs to be in control and do what needs to be done. But you know why a lot of your teenagers do that?

Because they learned it from you. Maybe not it was an iPhone or an iPad. Maybe it was the TV. Maybe it was the radio. Maybe you were always on the phone with your buddy.

But they learned that family time really doesn't mean anything. There's really no such thing in our house as personal, looking at one another, listening to one another, carrying on a conversation with one another, and actually taking an interest in one another's lives.

[ 28 : 34 ] There's a tremendous breakdown in personal interaction in this country.

And it is basically not destroying families like drugs and alcohol, but it's destroying families' ability to communicate, to express love, to know and be known, to develop lives together, husbands and wives, parents and children.

And it filters on out into every other relationship as well. Many people in your life, or some people at least, need to have you to give them your undivided attention, need to see your eyes, know that your ears are tuned more than anything else they need from you.

They may not say that, but it is true. Now quickly, some people need our help physically, materially, financially.

Some people that we have good intentions of encouraging them with our words, they have needs that we need to step up to the plate and actually meet.

[ 30 : 11 ] Because God's placed them in our lives for us to do this. And you don't have to have a lot of money or even excess funds to do it. I remember times growing up, and my family, we were not poor people, but we were not well-off people.

We were below comfortable people. I didn't know that until I got to be older. But I figured it out. But I can remember my parents buying, not just a bag of groceries, but buying real needed food and clothing and other necessities for a neighbor family with four boys who are in desperate shape.

Severe poverty through circumstances beyond their control. And other neighbors stepped up and did that for this family.

And back in those days, my parents and these other neighbors, they didn't tell this family, we're praying for you. Why don't you call this government agency?

Why don't you call that social agency? Or let's see if we can get our church involved. No. My parents and these other neighbors, they did what they could do to meet needs that they saw and cared about.

[ 31 : 37 ] And yes, they got their church involved. But they didn't let their church or some other organization be a substitute for their involvement, for their sacrificial giving to meet needs that God laid before them, put on their heart they needed to meet, even if it costs us more than we can really afford.

Some people who need your encouragement, they need more than that and it will cost you. But let me also say some people who need your encouragement may need help that you cannot provide.

For an example, as we were talking about depression earlier, I am fully aware that some people suffer with severe depression. And they need more than an encouraging word from a loving friend.

They need that. They may need professional help. They may need spiritual counseling. They may need to see a medical doctor.

They may need to see a counselor. And so when those situations arise, we need to offer our encouraging word but do whatever we can to get them the help that they need that we can't provide.

[ 33 : 03 ] Let's go back to words. Words are powerful. We've seen already in our other studies, they can destroy but they can also build up.

And as God's people, that's what we're called to do. To use our words to build up. Use our words to encourage. And I want to encourage you to make a commitment that starting today, you're going to be more aware of the need to be an encourager to people you already know, you live with, you work with, you go to school with.

Ask God to just give you the desire and show you how and when and where to do these kind of things. But I want to conclude that we have each of these messages on our words.

Words matter more than a lot of people think because Jesus made it clear, made it perfectly clear in how he described words being used on judgment day.

Look at it again. I tell you, Jesus said, on the day of judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak.

[ 34 : 22 ] For by your words you will be justified. And by your words you will be condemned. Let's pray together. Dear God, Father, we are selfish people who naturally just look out for ourselves.

But help us this morning, dear God, to be awakened to the fact that there are people right around us that we know and love who need for us to notice them, take an interest in them, see their needs, and act.

Father, show us who we need today to speak some encouraging words to.

Show us what kind of words. Help us to do it from a motivation of real love, care, concern.

Help us to desire deeply to lift this person up. Lord, show us what's needed in addition to our words.

[ 36 : 05 ] Show us what needs to change there, not just one time, but the lifestyle change. Show us, dear God, how we need to speak and act in an encouraging way.

Then an attitude of prayer. Let's listen to the Lord and respond to Him right now. Understand that if you're not a Christian, your greatest need is a relationship with Jesus Christ that comes through turning from your sin and trusting Him and Him alone for your salvation.

Understand that it's by the grace of God that we can even speak encouraging words appropriately. So seek God's help, first of all in this.