

Bible Study on Communication

Introduction

Sometime shortly after we started our work on beetexting.com, the idea came to do a Bible study on communication. While we were certain we needed the study as individuals, we were equally as eager to look for direction on creating a communications product.

The Bible study, of course, exceeded all our hopes and desires. It presents God's intention for how we would use the gift of communication and practical wisdom for everyday situations.

Part one of this study is an overview of the Scriptures. This was a way for us to organize the Scripture relating to communication. We structured the Scriptures in relation to five questions;

1. What does this teach about God?
2. What does this teach about us?
3. What are the warnings to heed?
4. What are the commands to obey?
5. What are the promises to believe?

The first two questions were grouped into a single category: doctrine. Each of the other questions was given its own category: warnings, commands, and promises, for a total of four categories. For each category we listed the Scripture reference and a brief paraphrase. Part one was designed to give a concise overview to help us group and relate the Scripture to itself in an effort to bring it all together.

Part two of this study includes the entire Scripture and our layman commentary. In order to provide a structured reference for one wanting quick access to the Scriptures referenced in part one, part two is grouped according to the categories and subcategories that were established in part one.

On the next page we've included a table of contents. While the study is long, one could easily read part one in under 10 minutes. Much of the length of this study is due to the inclusion of the full Scripture in part two along with our lay commentary, which may or may not be beneficial to anyone else in their journey.

This started as an internal team document meant to guide our development of beetexting.com. However, we are excited to share this Bible Study on Communication with you! As a user of beetexting.com, if you ever have ideas for how we can make the product better for you and others, please visit our [product roadmap](#) and consider sharing, voting or commenting on a feature request. Thank you and we hope you enjoy the Bible Study!

Bee seeing you, team Beetexting

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Scripture Overview

Doctrine

What does this study teach me about God?

1. God hates lies (Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 6:16-19)
2. God communicates to us through His creation (Psalms 19:1-4a) and through speech (written word, prophets, Christ)
3. God communicates perfectly. God used communication to save us (John 3:16) and to hold us accountable (Romans 1:20); He makes His offer of life or death through communication

What does this study teach me about myself?

1. Our communication primarily relates to our speech but also includes the things we create, especially those that will survive us like something written or otherwise created; the culture we create. (Psalms 19:1-4a)
2. God created us in His image and gave us the gift of speech. (Genesis 1:27)
3. We belong to God as does our speech. We are to use this gift from God in accordance with his will (Isaiah 50:4).
4. As a fallen man, I am inclined to use speech improperly and to my detriment. (James 3:1-18, Proverbs 18:20)
5. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45, Matthew 12:34)
6. Man needs God to redeem his tongue. (Isaiah 32:1-4)

Warnings

What are the warnings to heed?

There are sundry warnings. This alone tells of the extreme danger associated with speech.

1. General warnings
 - a. Proverbs 18:6-8 (a fool's mouth is his destruction)
 - b. Proverbs 18:21 (death and life are in the power of the tongue)
 - c. Ecclesiastes 10:12 (lips of fools swallow themselves up)
 - d. Matthew 12:36 (give account for every idle word in the day of judgment)
 - e. Matthew 12:37 (by your speech shall you be justified and condemned)

- f. James 3:1-18 (on the power and evil nature of the tongue)
 - g. James 3:1 (teachers of God's Word have a stricter judgment)
2. Improper speech (matter)
- a. Proverbs 8:13 (God hates a froward mouth)
 - b. Proverbs 10:31 (tongue of the froward will not continue)
 - c. Proverbs 11:9 (an hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor)
 - d. Proverbs 12:6 (words of the wicked lay traps)
 - e. Proverbs 15:1 (grievous words stir up anger)
 - f. Proverbs 15:4 (evil speech is a breach in the Spirit)
 - g. Proverbs 17:9 (repeating a persons transgressions separates close friends)
 - h. Matthew 5:22 (people who call someone a fool or godless are in danger)
 - i. Ephesians 5:4 (foolish talk and coarse jesting are not convenient)
 - j. James 3:9-10 (if we are new men we shouldn't curse others)
3. Talking too much (manner)
- a. Proverbs 10:19 (in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin)
 - b. Proverbs 18:20 (men are self satisfied with their own speech, this can lead one to talk too much)
 - c. Proverbs 26:22 (the words of a talebearer are as wounds)
 - d. Ecclesiastes 5:3 (a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words)
 - e. Ecclesiastes 10:11 (a babbler, like a serpent, needs to be enchanted or he will strike)
 - f. Ecclesiastes 10:13 (a babbler's talk is foolish and mischievous)
 - g. Ecclesiastes 10:14 (a fool is full of words)
 - h. 2 Timothy 2:16 (profane and vain babblings increase unto more immorality)
4. Not giving our one's speech due consideration (whether in matter or manner)
- a. Proverbs 10:32 (a fool doesn't know what is acceptable speech)
 - b. Proverbs 11:12 (he who is devoid of wisdom doesn't hold his peace)
 - c. Proverbs 12:18 (speech can damage like the piercing of a sword)
 - d. Proverbs 13:3 (he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction)
 - e. Proverbs 15:2 (fools pour out speech without restraint or thought)
 - f. Proverbs 15:28 (wicked pour out speech without restraint or consideration)
 - g. Proverbs 18:13 (he that answereth without hearing is folly and shame unto him)
 - h. Ecclesiastes 5:2 (be not rash with thy words)
 - i. James 1:26 (a man who bridleth not his tongue, his religion is in vain)

Commands

What are the commands to obey?

1. General commands
 - a. Matthew 18:15 (resolve conflict in private, do not gossip or repeat a matter)
 - b. Ecclesiastes 5:2 (be not rash with thy words)
2. Proper speech (matter)
 - a. Leviticus 19:16 (do not slander)
 - b. 1 Samuel 2:3 (speak not proudly nor arrogantly)
 - c. Psalm 34:13 (do not speak evil or lie)
 - d. Proverbs 4:24 (put away crooked and devious talk)
 - e. Romans 12:14 (bless those who persecute you, do not curse them)
 - f. Ephesians 4:15 (speak the truth in love)
 - g. Ephesians 4:25 (speak the truth, do not deceive)
 - h. Ephesians 4:29 (let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth)
 - i. Ephesians 4:29 (use speech to edify others and minister grace)
 - j. Ephesians 4:31 (put off all slander)
 - k. Philippians 2:14 (do all things without grumbling or questioning)
 - l. Colossians 3:8 (put away slander and obscene talk)
 - m. Colossians 3:16 (use speech to glorify God, share the good news & praise Him)
 - n. Colossians 3:17 (use speech to give thanks)
 - o. 1 Peter 3:9-11 (bless enemies, refrain to speak evil or guile)
 - p. James 5:12 (do not swear, let yes be yes and no, no)
3. Listen more than you speak (manner)
 - a. Proverbs 16:23 (teach one's lips, do not let them lead)
 - b. Proverbs 20:19 (do not associate with babblers)
 - c. 2 Timothy 2:16 (shun profane and vain babblings)
 - d. James 1:18-20 (be quick to hear and slow to speak)
4. Give one's speech due consideration (whether in matter or manner)
 - a. Colossians 4:6 (let your speech be full of grace, both in manner and matter)
 - b. Titus 2:8 (give your speech due consideration by considering your opponents)
 - c. 1 Peter 3:15 (be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear)
5. Encourage disciples
 - a. Acts 14:22 (encourage disciples, through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God)
 - b. Titus 3:1-2 (encourage disciples to speak evil of no one)
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:12 (encourage disciples, be an example in word and in conversation)

Promises

What are the promises to believe?

- General promises
 - Proverbs 12:6 (words of the wicked lieth in wait, but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them)
 - Proverbs 16:13 (leaders love people who speak rightly)
 - Matthew 5:11 (blessed are ye when men say all manner of evil against you for my sake)
- Proper speech (matter)
 - Psalm 37:30-31 (good life when we speak wisdom and justice)
 - Proverbs 12:18 (the tongue of the wise is health)
 - Proverbs 12:25 (a good word can lift a heavy heart and make glad)
 - Proverbs 15:1 (a soft answer will turn away wrath)
 - Proverbs 16:24 (pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.)
 - 1 Peter 3:9-11 (good life comes when we do not speak evil or lies)
- Keeping your mouth (manner)
 - Proverbs 13:3 (he that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life)
 - Proverbs 17:27 (a wise man spares his words and a man of understanding has an excellent spirit).
 - Proverbs 17:28 (he that shutest his lips is esteemed a man of understanding)
 - Proverbs 21:23 (keep thy mouth, keep thy soul from trouble)
 - Proverbs 25:15 (by long forbearing is a prince persuaded, a soft tongue breaketh the bone)
- Give one's speech due consideration (whether in matter or manner)
 - Proverbs 15:23 (a timely word spoken will give a man joy)
 - Proverbs 16:23 (a wise heart will control the tongue and study his speech)
 - Proverbs 25:11 (a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver)
 - Proverbs 25:12 (a wise reprovew complements an obedient ear)

Prayers of Petition

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. - Psalms 19:14

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. - Psalms 141:3

Scripture with Commentary

Doctrine

What does this study teach me about God?

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

God hates a froward mouth. “*Froward*,” תְּהוֹפֹךְ תַּח־פּוּ־כָּא(h) perversity; perversion. Perversion meaning to pervert or change in an evil way from the intended and inherently good. God gave us speech for a purpose that is good.

Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:
¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Two of the seven things the Lord hates are dealing with speech. Another, sowing discord among brethren, can be done with speech as well. That makes three of the seven things the Lord hates having to do with speech.

Psalms 19:1-4a

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. ² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

God’s creation is the common language of the earth.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God communicated perfectly with us through the manifestation of Christ, through every deed and word of Christ, God warned us and offered us salvation.

Romans 1:20

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

God's creation communicates His existence and holds the world accountable.

What does this study teach me about myself?

Psalms 19:1-4a

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. ² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

God created man in his image and while communication is primarily thought to be done with speech what one creates will transcend languages throughout the world.

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Speech is something unique to mankind within God's creation.

Isaiah 50:4

The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

The gift of communication is given to men by God. It was given for a good purpose. It includes not only speaking but hearing and understanding. One must first listen if he is to be helpful.

James 3:1-18

¹ My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. ² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. ³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. ⁴ Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. ⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. ⁷ For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: ⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. ¹¹ Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? ¹² Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. ¹³ Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. ¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Here we learn of the dark nature of the tongue, of its power to change the direction of one's entire life, of its inclination toward pride, and of one's inability to tame it without God. This Scripture teaches us to fear the tongue without God and to desire it with God.

Proverbs 18:20-21

²⁰ A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled. ²¹ Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

"A man's belly," could be suggesting one's lower animal nature that he is to put off as to not let it govern his actions and lead him astray. The Hebrew word for king is מלך, each of the three letters have a meaning and are thought to relate to how kings make decisions:

1. מ - brain; represents intellect
2. ל - heart; represents emotions
3. כ - liver; represents bodily function

A king makes decisions first with his intellect, then with his emotions and only lastly to satisfy his bodily urges or selfish endeavours. If we reverse the order of the letters, מלכ, the meaning of letters is reversed, indicating a reversal in decision making. The letters now form the word embarrassment or shame. Remember Hebrew is read right to left. If one makes decisions first based on his bodily urges, based on pleasure, etc., then if there are any options left he considers his emotions, then and only if there are any options left he considers logic, it will lead him to calamity and shame. On the other hand if one reverses that order in his decision making he will rise to positions of leadership.

Therefore, a teaching about satisfying that primal physical desire "belly" should give us pause as a warning. Here one may learn that his fallen nature is to talk too much which may give him pleasure in the immediate, however, if this desire is followed it will lead him to shame. "*Death and life*," The warning from this verse becomes clear when taken in context with the preceding verse twenty. If we love to talk primitively (of our own fallen nature) we will "die". If we love to talk as God intended, we will "live".

Luke 6:45

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Speech is the outward and audible expression of a man's heart. This brings forward two thoughts: 1.) For a Christian battling sin, this truth is a most helpful tool. He can audit his own speech to better understand the state of his own heart. This can help the pilgrim know what sin to confess and petition God to send His repentance for. 2.) Speech is telling. Anyone within earshot can hear if Christ is being allowed to reign in one's heart at any particular moment. How important to the Christian to use speech in the way God intended.

Matthew 12:34

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

See commentary directly above (Luke 6:45).

Isaiah 32:1-4

¹ Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

² And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. ³ And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. ⁴ The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

Man needs God to redeem his tongue.

Warnings

General warnings

Proverbs 18:6-8

⁶ A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. ⁷ A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul. ⁸ The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

“*Contention*,” רִיב (רִיב): n. Dispute, strife; case, lawsuit, A fool's lips *lead* him into bitter impasses. One's lips lead him. One must understand the principle warning about his mouth is this: our tongues are set on fire by hell. (James 3:6) Like anything that produces fire, one's mouth is not to go unattended, free to jump about and destroy whichever path the wind blows it. Instead one's mouth is to be kept watch over so as not to destroy him, his very “*soul*”.

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, see commentary on Proverbs 26:22 in Warnings, Talking Too Much section.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

See commentary on this verse in the Doctrine section

Ecclesiastes 10:12

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

“*Gracious*,” The often repeated truth in Scripture that a wise man's speech is gracious, tells us of its importance. A fool's own speech will harm himself. Here we see the similarities to one's own evil plans backfiring on himself. (Proverbs 26:27, Ecclesiastes 10:8-9, Psalms 64:8)

Matthew 12:36-37

³⁶ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

“Every idle word,” A sobering thought. The truth that we are responsible for every word we speak teaches us of our desperate need for God. *“Justified,”* The good news is that we can be justified. With God’s Helper we can use the gift of speech as He intended for us to use it.

James 3:1-18

See Doctrine section for this Scripture for commentary.

James 3:1

My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

“Masters,” translated teachers. James is not attempting to discourage those who are called to teach. Indeed, all Christians are called to teach by Christ himself in His great commission of His disciples, “teaching them...” (Matthew 28:20). James here is warning Jesus’ followers that they not take this calling to teach lightly. Teaching is a serious calling that comes with *“greater condemnation,”* or stricter judgment. Lastly, one must consider the context of this Scripture. Paraphrasing from MacArthur’s commentary on James... ‘In this time it was ordinary for lay people to read the Scriptures in the temple and give their interpretation.’ This warning may be directed to this form of teaching rather than a more intimate teaching from one follower to another. Either way, the believer is cautioned that when he is doing his duty and teaching others how to observe all that Jesus commanded they will be held to a stricter judgment.

Improper speech (matter)

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

See commentary on this verse in the Doctrine section.

Proverbs 10:31

The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

Found throughout the Scriptures is the theme that no one will be able to answer against the truth, meaning that nothing will stand against the truth or stop it “the just bringeth forth wisdom”, and nothing will stand against it or be able to stop it. On the other hand falsehoods will not stand, or be able to stand up to the truth. Here expressed in graphic terms of the mouth of the just continuing to bring forth wisdom while the froward tongue is cut out, ceasing its ability to pour out lies. A startling image that will cause the believer to give proper consideration to what he says.

Proverbs 11:9

An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

No one likes to think of himself as an hypocrite. There is a certain repugnance to the idea of being one, perhaps because it pricks at our pride which can be so dreadfully dear to us. “*Neighbor*,” at the time of this writing, neighbor, denotes a closeness not present in today’s typical neighbors. Neighbors of the time of this writing would know each other well enough to libel and slander each other. That is, the village would know that one’s neighbor would have information that the community at large would not. Put another way, a disparaging accusation from a passerby would not carry the weight to do much damage. On the other hand, however, a disparaging accusation from someone believed to know the person well is more readily believed by those who hear it. Perhaps for two reasons: 1.) the community knows that the neighbor has the most information to give an accurate account and 2.) the community understands that neighbors’ de facto relation to one another is closeness and interdependence which would produce a natural loyalty. The accusour would then either need to be a fool or have great cause to level an accusation against his neighbor. The opposite is, of course, true and here we see the importance of the nature of the hypocrite. To slander or defame someone’s reputation you need to be close enough to them for them to slander or defame yours. Are any of us really able to stand against those who know us most intimately? The wise thing then is to not go around disparaging those whose business we know because we are close enough to them to know it. Put another way, an hypocrite is an hypocrite on more than one level: 1.) they disparage the only people who can disparage them, and who most certainly can. 2.) they disparage and harm those who have let them in close enough for them to do so. They have likely been let in close to help them or to receive help, therefore a measure of trust was granted to them and so when they attempt to effect damage, they betray. In summary, it’s self destructive to gossip and disparage our “neighbors”, those that we work with, depend on, who depend on us.

Proverbs 12:6

The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

“Lie in wait,” the wicked set traps with their words for unsuspecting people but the words of the upright will not fall into the traps or the traps won’t work on the words of the upright.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

A *“soft,”* רַךְ (rāk): adj., [a] gentle or tender, reply sends wrath on its way but *“grievous,”* עָצַב, vb., hurtful, causing grief, offending, words stoke anger.

Proverbs 15:4

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

“Tree of life,” Rev. 22:2, the tree of life has healing properties. Like many other promises dealing with wholesome speech we find here another promise of good speech being healthful and healing. *“Breach,”* Also like many other warnings dealing with speech here we have another where perverse speech causes a wound. In these warnings, the reader is left to consider if the wounds are to the hearer of the perverse speech or are to the originator himself - perhaps both. This warning speaks to the wound being on the Spirit who is our only defense against taming the tongue. This teaches us of the importance of putting off evil speech as it seems to propagate itself by quenching the Spirit.

Proverbs 17:9

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

First we see the warning that not only will repeating a transgression separate friends but the closest of friends. This tells us how disruptive and damaging this behaviour is. We know from Matthew 18:15-17 that the offended should go directly to the transgressor to seek resolution in private, before repeating the matter to another. The offended is only to go to another if the transgressor refuses to repent. In this case it may be that the offended is still not to repeat the matter until he is in the presence of the offender. Put another way, just because the offended goes to the offender first, and just because the offender does not repent, this does not mean the offended goes to another to build their case before they both return to the offender. How many well meaning people have sought advice and slipped in to this transgression? Perhaps it would be better, if the offended needed to bring a brother or two with them to discuss the matter with the offender, that the topic not be discussed without the offender present.

This warning not to repeat a transgression may then be one of three things: 1.) telling about the transgression to someone or more than one person other than the transgressor, 2.) telling about a transgression to which one is not the offended party, or 3.) in not letting something go and

repeating it to the transgressor or others even after they have apologized and repented, for example, not forgiving, harboring resentment and slandering. In the third situation one can see how it would create distance and separate even the closest of friends. In the second situation one could see how being a busybody could cause distance in relationships and could draw similarities from the warning of the meddler. (Proverbs 26:17) In the first situation though, it causes one to wonder, who are the friends it would separate. Would it separate the transgressor and the repeater, the repeater and the hearer, or the hearer and the transgressor? Perhaps all these parties and any involved in it would be separated.

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus tells us that being angry with a brother places one in danger of receiving the same judgment as that of a murderer. If one is angry with his brother “*without cause*,” εἰκῆ (eikē): adv.; in vain or rashly, they are in danger of the judgment of the sixth commandment. This warning from Christ was certainly shocking at the time and still may give the believer a needed wake up call to the severity of being angry with his brother. In a culture that is ripe with anger and judgment, this warning from Christ needs to be meditated on. No one wants to be a murderer but how quickly will a believer self-justify his quick temper based on snap judgments as righteous anger (with cause). Knowing the severity of the consequences of misjudging this, one must consider if they are giving their assessment of their own anger due consideration. How much safer a way to not be easily offended and slow to anger. “*Without a cause*,” could be a quick temper that leads one to be angry with someone who has made a mistake, think of a child spilling the proverbial milk; or it could be completely in vain - that is, ill founded and fabricated in one’s own mind, one misinterpreting another’s intentions or motives. “*Raca*,” meaning fool, Godless or cursed by nature of not knowing the truth. Placing this damning judgment on another is sin and will cause the usurping judge himself to be judged. How quick one can be to think they know another’s heart, but who can know another’s heart and have confidence to judge and condemn in justice but God? What dangerous things these thoughts can be.

Ephesians 5:4

Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Here we have not only the things to put off (foolish talking, course joking), which are not convenient or helpful, but the thing to put on to replace it (give thanks).

James 3:9-10

⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

The book of James presents test after test aiding the pilgrim who is working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), "Am I really saved?" Here we have another test. James tells us filthy and clean speech should not come from a believer. This gives pause for serious consideration to one who persists in cursing others.

Talking too much (manner)

Proverbs 10:19

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Two paths; one leading to death and another leading to life. Here we are told that when there are a multitude of words, sin is sure to be found in them but that a man who refrains to speak anything that crosses his mind is wise.

Proverbs 18:20

A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

See commentary for this verse in the Doctrine section.

Proverbs 26:22

The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

"Talebearer," גֹּסֵפֵן, or slanderer, fault finder, gossip. One needs to realize that listening to a talebearer is like taking arrows to the stomach. An arrow to the stomach was a deadly wound from one of the most formidable weapons of this time. This proverb is repeated in 18:8. Also, the word גֹּסֵפֵן translated here as talebearer is also used in Proverbs 16:28 but is translated whisperer; *"A froward man soweth strife: And a whisperer separateth chief friends."* "Whisperer", in secret. Looking at the warning of Proverbs 16:28 and seeing the striking similarities to the warning given in Proverbs 17:9; "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.", one can glean insight into the characteristics of a talebearer as being

one who repeats a transgression, whether real or not. See also commentary on Proverbs 17:9 in the Warnings, Improper Speech section for more on the damaging wounds this causes.

Ecclesiastes 5:3

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

“Business,” or affairs. A dream can come from having a lot on your mind. Things bouncing around and unsettled or unresolved in one’s mind, specifically vain things or to put it another way worrying about things one ought not to be thinking about in the first place. (Ecclesiastes 5:7) b.) Similarly to a multitude of vain thoughts bouncing around one’s mind, a fool is known for having a multitude of vain thoughts bouncing around and out of his mouth instead of perhaps only verbalizing things that he has had time to resolve in his mind and give due consideration. (Ecclesiastes 5:7) See also commentary on Ecclesiastes 5:2 in Warnings Not Giving One’s Speech Due Consideration section.

Ecclesiastes 10:11

Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

A babbler, like a serpent, needs to be enchanted or he will strike. A babbler may be so riddled with complexities that he may need to be continually pacified in order to keep him calm and friendly.

Ecclesiastes 10:13

The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

A babbler’s (v11) talk is foolish from beginning to end. His intentions are underhanded as he desires something for himself even though his plans are madness (not profitable for himself anyway).

Ecclesiastes 10:14

A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

“A fool,” perhaps to make up for having nothing of importance to say, will say nothing of importance over and over again. “*a man cannot tell what shall be;*” perhaps on one can tell when

a fool will be done talking. *“what shall be after him,”* A fool may think there is no limit to what they know, even the future, and so there is no end to what they can and will talk about, whereas the wise know that the future is uncertain and so there is an end to what is profitable to discuss. *“who can tell him?”* A fool will likely have the last word. While difficult to determine the exact teachings of any proverb, one can see being full of words is foolish.

2 Timothy 2:16

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Profane and vain babblings are breeding grounds for more evil. “He was just talking”, “He didn’t really mean that” or the infamous “sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me.” All lies that may lead one believe that their words have little to no consequence. As we have seen from many warnings, one’s words do have real consequences. Here we see that one of those consequences is pulling one in to further sin and ungodliness.

Not giving one’s speech due consideration

Proverbs 10:32

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

God has provided us direction and presented to us what is good for us and what is not in terms of speech but the wicked do not heed God.

Proverbs 11:12

He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

See commentary on Proverbs 11:9 in the Warnings, Improper Speech section. A wise man understands that God has created us for community. We need each other. A fool will destroy the relationships he needs most. “Holdeth his peace.” indicating holding back thoughts vs letting them flow unchecked.

Proverbs 12:18

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

Another Proverb that reveals the opposite nature of good and evil speech. One causes wounds and another health.

Proverbs 13:3

He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

“He that keepeth his mouth,” suggests one’s need for a habit of restraint over the words he speaks. One without this habit of restraint comes to destruction. The prayer of petition from the Psalmist says, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3) Herein the Psalmist requests the Lord to send an Helper to hear every word that enters his mind to speak and either allow it out as profitable or deny its passage as unprofitable.

Proverbs 15:2

The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

“Useth knowledge aright,” there is a difference between knowing something and using that knowledge properly. See commentary on Proverbs 15:2 and Proverbs 25:11 in Promises, Give One’s Speech Due Consideration section. *“Poureth out,”* suggests a sort of dam or levee that has broken and is no longer there to do what is needed. See commentary on Proverbs 13:3 in Warning, Not Giving One’s Speech Due Consideration section (directly above).

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

“Studieth to answer,” tells the believer his responsibility. Through the study of God’s Word and with the help of the Spirit to bring it to our remembrance, the believer can discern what should leave his mouth and what should be shunned and confessed as sin in his heart. *“Poureth out,”* see commentary on Proverbs 15:2 in Warning, Not Giving One’s Speech Due Consideration section (directly above).

Proverbs 18:13

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

It would be foolish to presume you have all the needed information prior to answering. This reveals another layer of what is needed to consider one's words properly. Not only should one carefully consider if their speech is overflowing from a sinful heart, one also needs to consider all the external information to ensure his speech is fitting. (Proverbs 25:11)

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Ecclesiastes chapter five verses one through seven tell the reader to mind himself when in God's house. Verses two through seven all deal with speech. They give the standard warnings to give your words due consideration and because of this to make them few. This passage, though dealing with how one communicates with God as opposed to one's peers, stresses the holiness of God. Almost as if to say, if you will not regard the warnings and commands dealing with your communication with other men, you had better with God, because God is not to be trifled with. Certainly this entreatment will get the reader's attention as it well should. That said, shouldn't one heed all God's warnings and commands dealing with speech with the same reverence? Was it not God who warned and commanded? Does not God hold us accountable to how we interact with others as if we were interacting with God Himself? "...Inasmuch as ye did it (not) to one of the least of these, ye did it (not) to me." (Matthew 25:40 (and 45))

James 1:26

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

James here again provides a test for a hopeful believer to prove his faith to himself.

Commands

General commands

Matthew 18:15

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

A clear command to take a grievance directly to the source. Verse 16 goes on to say “But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Verse 17 continues “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Possibly most importantly here is who to talk with and in what order. First we are commanded to talk privately, one-on-one, with the brother who has offended us. At this point in time not a single other soul will know of the offence. If the brother will not listen, possibly apologize and repent or at least seek to resolve the matter, then take one or two others with thee. It does not say here to go and tell the matter to others and then all go and confront the brother all together. It does say to take them along and all talk together. It’s possible at this point that no conversation has been had regarding the offence that was not in the presence of the offending brother. See commentary on Proverbs 26:22 in Warning, Talking Too Much section.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

See commentary on Ecclesiastes 5:2 in Warnings Not Giving One’s Speech Due Consideration section.

Proper speech (matter)

Leviticus 19:16

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour; I am the Lord.

A command not to be a talebearer. See commentary on talebearing from Proverbs 26:22, Warnings, Talking Too Much section.

1 Samuel 2:3

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

In what some scholars believe to be part of Hannah's prophecy (1 Samuel 2:1-10), we get the command not to speak proudly nor arrogantly. Hanna was finally exalted over her enemy Peninnah in that she was able to bear a child with Elkanah, her husband. Instead of pride and arrogance overtaking her mouth, "... [her] mouth enlarged over [her] enemies because [she] rejoiced in [God's] salvation." (1 Samuel 2:1).

Psalm 34:13

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

"*Keep... from,*" as if the tongue's predisposition is in fact to do that which it should not. As such one is to "keep" or restrain one's speech. "*Guile,*" מִרְמָה mir-mā(h) trick, fraud; disillusionment. We are to restrain our speech from deception. Do not overlook the small unnoticed deception. How quickly and easily a seemingly expedient half truth or deceptively vague response can pour out of one's mouth who refuses to think before they speak.

Proverbs 4:24

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

"*Froward,*" תְּהוֹפֹכָה tāh-pū-ḵā(h) perversity; perversion. "*Put away,*" as if to help the reader understand that the perversion is already out of place or has already sprung loose and needs to be put away. "*Far from thee,*" helps the reader understand the danger of the sin. This is not something to flirt with or to find the line between life and death and stand as near to it as one can get away with. Instead the line should be put past the horizon so one can profit from the rivers of water that is God's way. (Psalm 1:3)

Romans 12:14

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

"*Bless them,*" We are commanded to bless them which persecute [us]. "*curse not,*" the phrases here suggests that one is inclined to curse those who persecute him but here we are commanded

not to. If we are specifically commanded not to curse those who persecute us how much more should we not curse those who do not persecute us. There are sundry warnings given to not speak evil or curse men, to not slander or talebear. Here the warning is taken one step further, even if one is certain another has harmed them, they should not curse them.

“*Curse*,” Not to be confused with the modern definition of a ‘curse word.’ This word curse, καταράσθαι *katarasomai*, to curse or pronounce a curse upon, means to damn someone or to attempt to invoke God’s covenant curse upon them. It is the opposite of blessing someone or attempting to invoke God’s covenant grace upon them. A curse that is not backed by God’s covenant is impotent (Proverbs 26:2). To curse someone, one must first place themselves as judge over them. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded us to “bless those that curse you.” “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:...” Galatians 3:13. Revelation 22:3 promises us of a time when “...there shall be no more curse:...” A curse can also be invoked upon oneself in an attempt to convince others that he is telling the truth, such as when Peter “began to curse and swear” that he did not know of Jesus. See commentary on James 5:12 in Commands, Proper Speech section. The gift of speech was not given for us to curse others.

Ephesians 4:15

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Here we learn that the purpose for the gift of speech we have been given is to speak the truth in love. As we do this we grow up in Christ. God is truth and God is love. Perhaps a good place to start is to speak less on things of the world and speak more of God: praising Him, thanking Him, and being a witness of what He has done.

Ephesians 4:25

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

“*Members one of another*,” is used here to entreat the reader to realize that lying to a brother in Christ is doing harm to himself.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

“*No corrupt communication*,” corruption or perversion of speech, points to the fallen nature of speech from its intended purpose. Here we are not commanded to be sure our good speech

outweighs our corrupt speech but rather to never let corrupt speech leave our mouths. This speaks to the seriousness of God's Word. Just as one understands thou shalt not murder means never, here God means never too. "*Good to the use of edifying,*" Edify, *ingoikodomē oikodomē* building; edification; make more able. We are given the principle of replacement here, don't do this but do that instead. We are also given instruction on the intended purpose of our gift of speech, to minister grace. Speech that is not only graceful in manner but full of grace in matter. The topic of our speech should be Christ. See also commentary on Colossians 4:6 in the Commands, Giving One's Speech Proper Consideration.

Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

"*Evil speaking,*" βλασφημέω (*blasphēmeō*). vb. to blaspheme, revile, slander, malign, defame. Speaking disparagingly and abusively against God (blasphemy) and others (slander).

Philippians 2:14

Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

"*Do all things,*" an all encompassing command to go about all of one's business in life without complaining or arguing. "*Murmurings,*" γογγυσμός *gongysmos* complaining; grumbling. "*Disputings,*" διαλογισμός *dialogismos*, doubting or questioning, arguing and disputing.

Colossians 3:8

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

"*But now,*" in reference to the new man and how a new man in Christ ought to behave. Saving faith in Christ reforms the man including his tongue. "*Blasphemy,*" see commentary on Ephesians 4:31. "*Filthy communication,*" αἰσχρολογία *aischrologia* abusive language.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Similar to the command to use our speech to minister grace, given in Ephesians 4:29, here we have more instruction on how to use our tongues for their intended purpose. Here we have a precondition to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. *“Dwell in you richly,”* ἐνοικέω enoikeō live; dwell; dwell (in); the word of Christ is alive in the new man and as such the new man should teach and admonish his fellow brothers and sisters in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, this is in stark contrast to teaching or admonishing in judgment and harsh words. The verse goes on to say all this should be happening with grace in the new man’s heart. Considering this approach would seem to leave much of the needed conviction for repentance to the Spirit, between each man and Jesus.

Colossians 3:17

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

A clear command to adhere to the doctrine that God gave man speech for His purposes and not man’s. *“In the name of,”* in accordance with the character of our Lord Jesus. *“Giving thanks to God,”* is the spirit in which our speech should be.

1 Peter 3:9-11

⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

“Not rendering evil for evil,” Similar to the command to bless those who persecute us given in Romans 12:14, the believer is here commanded to use his speech to respond to evil with goodness and is promised an inheritance of goodness in return. *“Let him refrain,”* Another command to refrain suggesting man’s fallen nature and need for repentance in his use of the gift of speech. *“Let him eschew evil, and do good;”* A command that the believer should avoid evil and instead do good with his speech; he should deliberately attempt to affect peace with his words.

James 5:12

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

If your yes is really yes and your no is really no in truth, then there will be no need to swear oaths to prove yourself to anyone as they will all know you as a truthful person. Put another way, if you are known as a truthful person you will not need to swear oaths to make others believe you. An oath can take the form of pronouncing a curse upon oneself or someone else should he be found a liar. This is an attempt to externally validate one's character and gain others' trust when they will not trust one on his own word. Such as when Peter "began to curse and swear" that he did not know of Jesus. See Commentary on Romans 12:14 in Commands, Proper Speech section.

Listen more than you speak (manner)

Proverbs 16:23

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

"Teacheth his mouth," indicating that a wise man will not let his lips lead but rather he will control his lips and teach them. *"Learning,"* his lips learn, indicating a change in behavior. See commentary on the same scripture in Promises section.

Proverbs 20:19

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Here we see the link between the talebearer and the flatterer. Talebearer; see commentary on Proverbs 26:22 in the Warnings, Talking Too Much section. Both manifestations of these corrupt forms of communication attempt to draw one in. The hearer of a tale may think knowing the information can help him, but in fact "the words of a talebearer are as wounds" Proverbs 18:8. The flatterer attempts to endear himself to another but we know 1.) his heart has another purpose "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Psalm 12:2, and 2.) that the words of his mouth pour out death as an open sepulchre. "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is very wickedness; Their throat is an open sepulchre; They flatter with their tongue." Psalm 5:9. Both the talebearer and the flatterer attempt to use corrupt communication to get close to another and advance their own desires but we know any efficacy to this end will be temporary. " ⁶A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calleth for strokes. ⁷ A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul." Proverbs 18:6-7 A talebearer and a flatterer always seem to find an ear in the world but a Christian here is commanded not to be that ear so as to avoid entangling himself in the certain calamity that will follow.

2 Timothy 2:16

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Paul's warning to Timothy, specifically in relation to Hymenaeus and Philetus's false teachings. Paul warns Timothy that this sort of empty chatter can damage the church. Paul says to shun such profane and vain babblings.

James 1:18-20

¹⁸ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. ¹⁹ Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: ²⁰ For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

"Begat he us," God brought man into existence and then redeemed him with His Word. *"Swift to hear,"* All of man's blessings flow from God's Word so then man ought to be quick to hear. God has done much good with His word, one needs to be ready to listen to receive it. A man can not speak or form thoughts of speech at the same time as he listens. *"Slow to speak,"* so then, a man needs to be slow to speak so that he can listen. If we are to be one body, letting the Spirit lead us, we must cooperate. Communication is cardinal to cooperation and unity. We are commanded to give our words due consideration and that is what we must do. One may do well to avoid a conversation that is not a ready host to this command. One should be sure not to contribute to a conversation in a way that produces no space for slow speaking and listening. *"Slow to wrath,"* if a man is swift to hear and slow to speak, they will be truly listening. A quick judgment on what one hears can break down this crucial posture, diverting one's attention away from listening to his own thoughts in a moment. This snap judgment can lead to the opposite of being slow to speak whether one's thoughts are verbalized or not. If one is no longer listening but speaking to themselves are they being slow to speak? This is crucial to the very nature of a follower of Christ.

James 1:18-20 is foundational to a believer. If he is a follower of Christ he will be a doer of these commands. The commands in verse 19 directly follow the proclamation that God created us and saved us. God created us and saved us *"Wherefore,"* (so that) we can follow this command to be great listeners. One must consider why being a great listener is such a central trait in the new man God creates. How can one do God's will if he doesn't listen to Him? How can one serve others if he doesn't listen to them? (Matthew 25:31-46) How can one be a repentant if he doesn't first hear? *"Worketh not,"* if we can not listen, we can not work the righteousness of God. If we are quick to judge we can not do His will.

Give one's speech due consideration (whether in matter or manner)

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

“Let your speech be always with grace,” both in manner and matter. Graceful communication is not only courteous (manner) but it is full of the Good News (matter) and therefore edifying.

“Seasoned with salt,” Salt among its several other uses, will sting a wound, can be used to preserve food, and will break down ice on a winter walkway, however the phrase “seasoned with salt” refers to its properties as a seasoning. Similarly, when Christ referred to his followers as the salt of the earth He makes mention of it losing its taste, again indicating that His followers are being likened to salt as a seasoning. He even points out that once it loses its taste it's only good for other disappointing applications such as helping people not lose their balance; not a bad property in and of itself but not the application Christ wants for his followers. Salt as a seasoning is applied to bring out that which is pleasant.

Titus 2:8

Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

The Christian's speech should be sound in truth so that it will stand against an enemy.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:” The prerequisite here is to make the Lord holy in one's heart. To fear the Lord and revere Him in one's heart is the first step to repentance and returning to Him. What one thinks of when they think of God may be the most important thoughts developed in his mind. When God holds the proper place in one's mind, He will reign in their heart. If He reigns in the heart, one will be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [him] a reason of the hope that is in [him] with meekness and fear: “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Matthew 12:34b.

Encourage disciples

Acts 14:22

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Paul and Barnabas laid a foundation for the church in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Here we have two of the activities they performed to build on that foundation when they returned to these towns. “*Confirming the souls of the disciples,*” Confirming; ἐπιστηρίζω *epistērīzō* strengthen, new believers need things repeated. We also see this in Paul’s letter to Timothy; “¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17. There are many temptations for young believers to leave the faith. A leader in the church will use his speech to set the path before a disciple with *doctrine*, will *reprove* a disciple who has strayed from the path, help him *correct* his course to get back on the path, and give him specific *instruction* on how to stay on the path in similar situations. Timothy was thought to be with Paul and Barnabas during this circuit as one of their disciples, so he was very likely familiar with this strengthening ministry. (2 Timothy 3:10-11) “Exhorting them to continue in the faith,” “*Exhorting,*” παρακαλέω *parakaleō* urge; implore; exhort, a leader in the church will use his speech to urge, implore and strongly encourage the disciples. “*and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God.*” A key piece of doctrine for strengthening new believers is specifically listed here among two key principles. This tells us of its importance. “*We,*” all believers *must* go through *much* tribulation in order to enter the kingdom of God. “*Tribulation,*” θλίψις *thlipsis* distress; affliction. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12. “That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.” 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

Titus 3:1-2

¹ Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, ² To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Here Paul gives Titus instructions for how Titus should renew his disciples minds toward repentance. The topic here is how believers are to interact with others. The opening seems to address specifically how the church should interact with the local Greek government in Crete. “*Subject to,*” ὑποτάσσω (*hypotassō*): vb. to obey, be obedient. “*Principalities,*” ἀρχή (*archē*). n. beginning, ruler. This word is often in reference to the supernatural and its root means beginning. Since God is the first and ultimate authority all legitimate authority comes from Him. (Acts 5:29, Exodus 20:30) “*Powers,*” ἐξουσία (*exousia*). n. Authority. “*Magistrates,*” πειθαρχέω (*peitharcheō*) vb. to obey one in authority. The Bible is ripe with examples of Christian disobedience to government; Moses’ mother withheld Moses against the decree of the Pharaoh’s government to

slay baby boys, Daniel prayed in disobedience to the law put forth by King Darius not to pray, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to worship the golden statue of Nebchadnezzar, and many others. However, Moses' Mother did not kill a soldier of the government, Daniel did not use his political position to speak out against the evil law in an attempt to delegitimize King Darius' authority, nor did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego attempt to start an uprising. I put forth these examples of what they didn't do here to present that they were able to obey God in meekness, even in the face of unjust laws. As the Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown published in 1871 puts it, "[meekness is] the opposite of passionate severity." Obedience to God in meekness, when disobedience to an illegitimate authority is in question, seems to call the Christ follower to focus on how he ought to obey God rather than on how the authority in question ought to be disobeyed. If there would be any excuse to grumble and speak ill of anyone, is there a more socially acceptable circumstance than to tear down a public official whose policy is so blatantly self-serving? Still, the command here is to refrain from speaking evil, to be gentle, and meek.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Paul here instructs Timothy to be an example to his disciples in word and in conversation. Leaders ensure they set a good example. While this instruction covers more than speech it is noteworthy that speech is first ahead of "*conversation*," (ἀναστροφή (anastrophē). n. conduct, way of life.) love, spirit, faith and purity.

Promises

General promises

Proverbs 12:6

The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

“But,” the godly here counters the evil. The believer is to use his mouth to protect and *“deliver,”* נִצַּל (nā·ṣāl): v. save. *“The mouth of the upright,”* will save, perhaps himself as well as those that are the target of the wicked.

Proverbs 16:13

Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

Leaders favor people who use their speech rightly; in accordance with God's purpose for our speech.

Matthew 5:11

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

“For my sake,” the precondition here is that the believer will be blessed if they are persecuted because they obeyed Christ. This is the opposite of the consequences that come at the hands of others to those who medel or sin. *“He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.”* Proverbs 26:17.

Proper speech (matter)

Psalm 37:30-31

³⁰ The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. ³¹ The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Believers are obedient to God and out of their mouths come wisdom and justice. Praise God that He will renew our speech, for our speech is hopeless without Him! From Matthew Henry's Commentary, "that his mouth *speaketh wisdom*; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him. His tongue talks not of things idle and impertinent, but *of judgment*, that is, of the word and providence of God and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good and to the use of edifying."

Proverbs 12:18

There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.

One has a choice to make. Will his tongue bring about death or life. The consequences of his choices are grave. Man needs to choose Christ in order to use his speech properly. If he does, he is promised a gift of healing, possibly even healing the wounds of the evil tongue.

Proverbs 12:25

Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

"*Heaviness*," דאגה (de' ā-ḡā(h)): n., anxiety, restlessness, worry. A good word can lift the spirit of an anxious person.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Another choice is presented. A "*soft*," רך (răḵ): adj., [a] gentle or tender, a reply that is tender turns away passion but "*grievous*," עצב, vb., hurtful, causing grief, an offensive response further stokes the passionate anger of the upset person.

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones

Much has been made of the real and harmful effects of chronic stress (worry) on one's body. Pleasant words are sweet to the soul and health to the bones. A good report is also a desirable thing to someone ripe with worry and can make the bones fat. Here we see how words can affect one's mental state and effect positive outcomes in the body. One must also consider how words of worry can have a real and negative effect on his own and others health, both mental and

physical. While a believer should not worry because he trusts in Christ, a pleasant word can help a struggling friend.

1 Peter 3:9-11

⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

See commentary on 1 Peter 3:9-11 Commands, Proper Speech section.

Keeping your mouth (manner)

Proverbs 13:3

He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

If one keeps his mouth he will keep his life. In the same manner one would give due consideration to the things he does with his life, one needs to understand that being reckless with his mouth is being reckless with his very life.

Proverbs 17:27

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

A promise here is given that if one gains knowledge he will spare his words. When taken with the second part of this verse this may specifically be referring to one sparing his words when he is still processing something disappointing and may say too much if he responds in haste. A man who understands the dangers of a quick temper and loose speech gains an excellent spirit. *“Excellent,”* קָר (qār): adj. cool, calm, composed. Here one can see the driving nature of the tongue expounded on in James 3:3-5, “³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. ⁴ Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. ⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” A man who has knowledge and understanding of the tongue will not speak hastily and let his mouth lead him into anger and sin.

Proverbs 17:28

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

“Is counted wise,” even though he is not wise, he will be thought wise by others if he keeps silent.

Proverbs 21:23

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

“Keepeth,” שָׁמַר (šāmar). Vb. to keep, preserve; to keep watch over, guard; to obey. One needs this Spirit to stand in sentry duty at the edge of his lips. His orders: to keep watch and ensure nothing gets past that is improper and damaging to the speaker or others. (James 3:6) One must first understand the corrupt nature of their tongue if he wants to come alongside the Spirit and obey God. The tongue is a gift from God that was corrupted by the fall and must now be held back. Again, here the driving force of the tongue and its ability to lead the whole soul into trouble is revealed as a warning. (James 3:3-6) The Promise is that one can avoid the troubles of the tongue if he restrains it.

Proverbs 25:15

By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

A general principle here for ensuring one's point has been given its best chance at persuading another. *“A prince is persuaded,”* notice it does not say a king. A king, may in general, be thought to be wiser and more mature than a prince who may be younger and have less experience. Therefore the king may be more ready to listen than a prince. A prince, in general, may be younger with more ego and pride which may make it difficult for him to listen and be ready to change his mind. The principle here may be that this advice will work even with a prince who may be the most difficult leader to persuade. *“Long forbearing,”* before one is ready to listen he often needs to feel listened to. Before one delivers his point of view up for consideration he is wise to listen well to others. This takes patience, the opposite of interrupting and lying in wait for the slightest opportunity to inject oneself into the conversation, often then causing an affront and turning a discussion of considering two opinions into an argument. For more on listening, see commentary on James 1:18-20 in Commands, Listen More than you Speak section.

“A soft tongue,” רַךְ (rāk): adj. tender, mild, gentle. Dogmatically asserting one's point of view as fact leaves no room for discussion. At this point one can feel as if the discussion is over. The opposite of communicating without opinion. Communication rife with opinion inflates and projects one's ego. To take this approach with leadership, especially a prince, can produce a stand off of sorts where one ego or will comes up against the other - certainly an unwise approach when attempting to persuade. Even a king attempting to persuade a peasant to change his mind on a

matter is persuading from a position of weakness, since the peasant is the king of his own mind. If this final thrust of dogmatic opinion that pits two views and their wills against each other is inserted, the other side here may feel they have only two choices: 1.) to change their mind by adopting the others or 2.) to consider it an impasse, which can be met with aggression or avoidance (fight or flight). "A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes." Proverbs 18:6 A fool's lips lead him into bitter impasses. "A *soft tongue*," however, leaves room in the conversation for discussion without opinion and in the other person's mind for continued introspection. If a mind is going to be changed, it will be changed within itself. Most may not allow their minds to be changed for them. This approach all comes from a spirit of patience and trust in God's sovereignty, the opposite of a hot temper that demands concessions to its thinking now.

Give one's speech due consideration (whether in matter or manner)

Proverbs 15:23

A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

A man will enjoy a wise reply he gives. A wise reply is well timed. A well timed word is a word that is ready to be received (desired) and ready to be given (given due consideration).

Proverbs 16:23

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

"*The heart of the wise*," The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the LORD (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10 and Psalms 111:10) Those who fear the Lord will have success in teaching their mouths and their lips will learn, meaning their behavior will change. Praise God!

Proverbs 25:11

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

"*A word fitly spoken*," encompasses all we have learned about speech. It *fits in* with God's purpose for giving us speech. It is full of grace, it is spoken to those who desire it, and it is given due consideration. "*Pictures*," מַשְׂכִּיטָה (măś·kîṭ): n. Sculpture. Like apples of pure gold in a sculpture made of silver, they are the most precious part of the art piece. Apples of gold would perhaps be the finishing touch, possibly even the centerpiece of a sculpture made of silver. Certainly it would be the most valuable part of the sculpture. If we are a sculpture of God's making, when we use the gift of speech in accordance with God's purposes it all comes together. The only hope for this

is Christ in our heart, for out of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34) and we are not able to tame our tongue on our own (James 3:8) but whoever can tame it is perfect (James 3:2). However, if we are missing these apples of gold, the sculpture is incomplete. It will not be what the Sculptor intended. It will be missing its most valuable part, perhaps even the centerpiece.

Proverbs 25:12

As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear.

A wise reprovener complements an obedient ear, they fit well together. They make a good team. "Obedient," *שָׂמַע* (*šā-mā'*): v. hear. An obedient ear is an ear that hears. Not necessarily a person with an obedient disposition that also has ears to aid that disposition. Unity and teamwork depend on people who are good listeners. See commentary on James 1:18-20 in Commands, Listen More than you Speak section.

Perhaps this is part of what makes an ear that hears (He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. - Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9) but when one considers Jesus's words it may cause them to consider the concept of election embedded in this verse. Matthew 11:15, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." We know that faith comes from hearing. Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It would seem then that God is the giver of an ear that hears. How oft can one read the same verse, year-after-year, and the Spirit gives them a new understanding, year-after-year, apt to their circumstances. The Spirit is certainly a wise reprovener, but He is also the giver of an ear that hears. God sends man repentance. It is not something he accomplishes. When this happens it is precious. When the Spirit works and man doesn't fight it, when the Spirit speaks and man listens, it is an ornament of gold.