

Words are Weighty

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Unless we have not been given the ability to speak, it is difficult to go through an entire day without saying a word. Whether we have a very outgoing personality or we are very timid, we talk every day. We use words to communicate our thoughts.

That much is obvious.

But do we often consider the great *weight* that our words carry?

Words are weighty. How?

First, the weight of our words is revealed in the type of words they are. It has been said that idle hands are the devil's tools. So are idle words. In Matthew 12:36, 37 Jesus says, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." A word that is idle is one that is unprofitable. If the reason we speak certain words that do not profit our neighbor, we should not speak them at all. In this we can see that the type of words we speak are determined by the reason we choose to speak. Two very different vocabularies are in use when we build someone up with our words or when we cut them down.

Consider the contrast between the two vocabularies described in Proverbs 10. "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:11). The words of the righteous are satisfying and refreshing, while the words of the wicked are violent and harmful. "The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom" (10:21). The words of the righteous are wholesome, while the words of fools are empty and lacking. "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out" (10:31). The words of the just are wise, while the words of the froward are cut short because of their misuse.

With our knowledge of the contrast between the two vocabularies, do we practice using the one and putting away the other? Do we speak in a way that builds up our neighbor, or do we cut our neighbor down with our words? Do we allow ourselves to be entertained by the words of the world as it comes to us through its often-profane music, or do we listen to music that is as a well of life (Prov. 10:11)? Is our language in the work-place violent and explosive, or does it reflect a person who is wise and self-disciplined?

Second, consider the amount of words we use. Proverbs 10:19 instructs us that “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” This brings us to the simple, but often ignored exercise of restraint. The more we talk, the greater the chance we sin. That is not to say that the more talkative people we know are the greater sinners or more likely to sin. Rather, in the *excess* of words, sin is more likely to abound.

Along with the amount of words we speak comes our realization of how quick we are inclined to speak. Proverbs 29:11 instructs us in this regard. “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” Are we quick to speak, saying whatever comes to our mind as soon as it enters our mind, or do we contemplate what we say before we allow it to exit our lips? The wise man thinks before he speaks. The wise man considers that his words can build someone up or knock them over like a wrecking ball.

Finally, words are weighty in that their ultimate use is in our communication and fellowship with God. Jehovah God is the covenant God who is our friend. As our friend he speaks to us through scripture and the preaching of Christ Jesus, who is the Word of God (John 1). As God’s children we speak to him through prayer and singing. All of this is done with words. What a wonder that in this way we have a direct line with our Father in heaven! Almighty, incomprehensible God has condescended to us, his children, in a way that we can know him and understand him and speak with him. Let us always remember this aspect of speech so that it reminds us of its proper use.

My point in writing on this subject is not to cause us to talk less or stop talking altogether. Rather, speak! Speak using language in the proper way with restraint. Speak in a way that reflects wisdom. Speak in order to build up your neighbor. Speak in a way that feeds others (Prov. 10:21). Speak to God in prayer. Speak to God as you bring him your praises. Speak of how the mercy of God through Christ has delivered you. Speak in a way that glorifies the one who gave you the ability to speak.

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