

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Proverbs: Topical Applications of Proverbs
III. The Proverbs Themselves, Proverbs 10:1-31:31
H. God's Advice On Our Speech

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

One childhood saying asserts, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me!" However, in reality, words can either greatly help or they can do a lot of damage.

(1) Words can greatly encourage others: Though the New York Jets quarterback Geno Smith began his career as a Jet quarterback before taking a "long and winding NFL journey" with other teams, he was the object of praise by the team's new offensive coordinator Frank Reich. Reich "played with Jim Kelly and coached Peyton Manning, Philip Rivers, Andrew Luck and Matt Ryan during an NFL career that has spanned more than four decades. So, he knows an outstanding quarterback when he sees one. That's what made" his recent "effusive praise of Geno . . . so noteworthy. If not a bit surprising. 'I am just so impressed by Geno,' Reich said . . . 'I cannot express that enough. I know we haven't played any games yet. We've got a long way to go. We've got a lot to prove and everybody's got a lot to prove. But man, he is on point. His preparation is top notch. His football mind is elite.'" (Dennis Waszak, Jr., "Jet's Reich raves about Smith's 'elite' football mind," Republican-American, June 19, 2026, p. B7)

(2) On the other hand, words can do a great amount of harm: "A string of threats targeting schools in at least 10 Connecticut towns just before summer break represent a larger increase in coordinated hoax calls popping up across the state and country that may be tied to extremist groups, some experts say . . . (T)he barrage of . . . phone calls that prompted school lockdowns and police responses . . . are examples of swatting, an illegal practice in which perpetrators make false reports of threats in order to draw a large police presence and cause panic." (Natasha Sokoloff, "Connecticut schools face coordinated swatting threats," op. cit., June 19, 2026, p. A1)

(3) In response to some strong statements that have been made in the political realm, some influential parties have tried to curb the speech of their political foes, creating a national reaction: A recent "survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research" found "that most Americans across demographics believe the right to vote, the right to free speech and freedom of religion are integral to the country. But . . . deep anxieties" exist "(as) nearly half of Americans say freedom of speech is under major threat . . ." (Matt Brown and Linley Sanders, "Most Americans see freedoms under threat," op. cit., June 18, 2026, p. B10)

Need: *So we ask, "What is God's advice regarding our speech and the speech of other people that we hear?"*

- I. God's "wisdom," His *hokmah*, or fixed eternal moral order for success and blessing, applies to many issues of human concern including the need to know what God advises on human speech.**
- II. We thus view proverbs translated from the Hebrew Biblical text (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica) in the Book of Proverbs on God's advice on human speech (as follows):**
 - A. Words are potent:** Proverbs 18:21 states, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit," and this fact can be illustrated in the following proverbs:
 1. "A wicked messenger falls into calamity, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing," Proverbs 13:17.
 2. "With his sinful talk an evil man is entrapped, but a righteous man comes out of narrow straits," Pr. 12:13.
 3. "A fountain of life is the mouth of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked, 10:11.
 4. "A truthful witness rescues lives, but a false witness is deceitful (sending the innocent to death), Pr. 14:25.
 5. "The lips of the righteous [literally] pasture (nourish) many, but fools die for lack of judgment, Pr. 10:21.
 - B. This fact can be detailed in several ways (as follows):**
 1. Words affect the inner man: (a) "Anxious care in the heart of a man depresses it, but a wholesome word gladdens it," Pr. 12:25. (b) "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit," Pr. 15:4. (c) "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down into the innermost parts," Pr. 18:8. (d) "A mild, gentle answer turns away fury, but a hurtful word stirs up anger," Pr. 15:1. (e) "Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone," Proverbs 25:15.
 2. Words affect one's the welfare of one's livelihood: Proverbs 13:2 states, "From the fruit of his lips a nobleman eats good things, but the life principle of the treacherous (causes them to eat) violence."
 3. Sinful words harm: (a) They harm others: (i) "Like clouds and wind but no rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give," Pr. 25:14. (ii) Like cutting off one's feet or drinking violence is the sending of a message by the hand of a fool,' Pr. 26:6. (iii) "Like a lame man's legs that hang limp is a proverb in the

mouth of a fool,” Pr. 26:7. (iv) “Like a thorn bush in a drunkard’s hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool,” Pr. 26:9. (v) “He who conceals his hatred (is forced to lie) has lying lips, and he who spreads slander (by hatred), he is a fool,” Pr. 10:18. (vi) A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is a scorching fire,” Prov. 16:27. (vii) “An evil man listens to evil lips; a liar pays attention to a malicious tongue,” Prov. 17:4. (viii) “Elegant lips are unsuited to a fool – how much worse lying lips to a ruler!” Pr. 17:7. (ix) “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding except exposing what is in himself,” Pr. 18:2. (b) Sinful words harm oneself: (i) “The lips of a fool brings him strife, and his mouth invites a beating. A fool’s mouth is his undoing and his lips are a snare to his soul,” Pr. 18:6-7. [“Mouth” and “lips” are in reverse order in v. 7 to dramatize how a fool’s misplaced, out-of-order words are his undoing, B. K. C., O. T., p. 944.] (ii) “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours forth lies will not go free,” Pr. 19:5. (iii) “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will perish,” Pr. 19:9. (iv) “Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the assembly at the gate he has nothing to say,” Pr. 24:7. (v) “The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but He overturns the words of the treacherous,” Pr. 22:12.

4. Righteous words help: (a) They help others: (i) “The wise in heart are called discerning, and appealing speech fosters instruction,” Pr. 16:21. (ii) A wise man’s heart gives insight to his mouth, and his lips promote instruction,” Pr. 16:23. (iii) “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the life principle and healing to the bones,” Pr. 16:24. (iv) “There is gold and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a jewel,” Pr. 20:15. (v) “An honest answer is as a kiss on the lips,” Pr. 24:26. (vi) “Like applies of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in the right circumstances,” Pr. 25:11. (vii) “Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear,” Pr. 25:12. (viii) “As the coolness of snow in harvest is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him,” Pr. 25:13. (b) Upright words help oneself: (i) “From the fruit of his lips a nobleman is satisfied with good things (as sure as) the dealing of the hand of a common man (laborer) (causes monetary) returns to him,” Pr. 12:14. (ii) “It is a joy to a man when he gives an apt answer, and how wholesome is (a right) word (at a right) time,” 15:23.
- C. Due to the power of words, we must take edifying action with the words we speak and the words we hear:
 1. To avoid harming others and to edify them, we must speak with careful restraint:
 - a. “A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much,” Proverbs 20:19.
 - b. “If words are many, there is no lack of transgression, but he who refrains his tongue is prudent,” Pr. 10:19.
 - c. “He who derides his neighbor lacks judgment, but a man of understanding remains silent,” Pr. 11:12.
 - d. “A talebearer uncovers a secret counsel, but a man of a trustworthy spirit covers an utterance,” Pr. 11:13.
 - e. “A sensible man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly,” Pr. 12:23.
 - f. “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered,” Pr. 17:27.
 - g. “Even a fool is considered wise if he keeps silent and discerning if he holds his tongue,” Pr. 17:28.
 - h. “He who guards his mouth and tongue preserves his life principle from (narrow) straits (trouble),” 21:23.
 2. To avoid being harmed and to be edified, we must respond to words we hear with careful restraint:
 - a. We must test all words we hear by Scripture to discern if they are true and righteous, 2 Timothy 3:13-17.
 - b. We must withdraw from those who speak false, sinful words (2 Timothy 2:20-21).
 - c. We must associate with those who have pure hearts and speak true, edifying words (2 Timothy 2:22; The phrase “with them” (KJV) uses the preposition *meta* in the genitive case to mean “in company with” those who call on the Lord from a pure heart [U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 734; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 509-511]. We need to fellowship with believers who edify with their words).

Lesson: *Words are potent, so God advises us both to speak and to handle the words we hear with careful restraint.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) In view of the power of words, may we rely on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16) for the careful restraint we need to speak and to respond to the words that are spoken unto us.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

On the first two issues in our introduction, the Jets’ offensive coordinator exemplified the good way to speak and the callers of swatting threats to schools the bad way to speak. On the issue of free speech, God wants us to modify our use of that liberty that we speak and accept what we hear spoken unto us only if it aligns with His righteousness.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we speak and respond to words that others speak to us with careful, edifying restraint.