

CONQUERING A RUNAWAY TONGUE

Proverbs 13:3 *Keep what you know to yourself, and you will be safe; talk too much, and you are done for.*

Intro: It is estimated that the average man speaks enough words in one year to fill 66 books, 800 pages long. He speaks 20,000 words a day. The average woman 30,000 words a day. We are a nation of talkers. Talk shows on TV, talk shows on the radio, car phones, and you can hardly eat lunch at a restaurant any more without someone's cell phone going off. We just like to talk.

It has been estimated that today, approximately 55 million Americans will listen to 400,000 pastors deliver over one billion words. And when it's all said and done, a lot more is said than done. Did you know that it takes a child two years to learn to talk and it takes a man all his life to learn how to keep his mouth shut?

There is so much in Proverbs on our words. There's over 120 verses related to different things about our speech. We can summarize everything in three major statements which I want to look at today Think before you speak. Always speak the truth. Always speak the truth in love.

I. First, THINK BEFORE WE SPEAK in other words, inspect before we inform. Or contemplate before we communicate

Proverbs 16:23 says *Wise people's minds tell them what to say, and that helps them be better teachers.*

Wise men think without talking, fools talk without thinking. The idea is to engage the brain before employing the tongue. You see, there's danger ahead when you throw your tongue into high gear before you get your brain going.

Its like the little poem that says

A wise old owl set in an oak
And the more he saw the less he spoke.
The less he spoke, the more he heard.
Let's try to be more like that bird.

The reason for this is "We will have to live with the consequences of everything we say." It is like the story of the police who were interviewing a man. They asked him, "Can you describe the man who beat you up?" The man said, "Of course I can. That's what I was doing when he hit me." Think about it like this, Even a fish would stay out of trouble if he had kept his mouth shut.

Proverbs 20:25 It's dangerous to promise something to God too quickly. After you've thought about it, it may be too late.

So we need to choose our commitments carefully. Calculate the cost and think before we speak because it's a trap to agree to something before we've really thought it through. Talk is not cheap! It can cost us a lot. Have you ever said "Yes" to a salesman and later regretted it? Have you ever made a promise to your kids and they wouldn't forget it nor would they let you forget it either?

What we say can make us sick or well, happy or sad, rich or poor, can get us married or divorced etc. What we say can win friends or make enemies. What we say can get us hired or fired. So we need to think before we speak.

2. ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH

Proverbs deals with a lot of kinds of dishonesty -- lying and deceit and exaggeration. What about the failure to be candid with people. Isn't that actually a form of dishonesty when we won't tell people the truth? In theory we would all agree, wouldn't we, that honesty is the best policy. But in practice doesn't it often work out very different from that?

We always seem to have some reason why it's not a good time to be honest in a particular situation. "If I told that person the truth you never know what would happen! They might blow up. They might get mad at me." Yet Proverbs 10:10 says *Someone who holds back the truth causes trouble, but one who openly criticizes works for peace.*

Why do we hold back the truth? Because probably we're just cowards and we'd rather do anything we can to avoid conflict. We want to keep the peace, not make waves, not rock the boat. How many times have you said that? Oh' don't say anything. Just don't rock the boat!!

Yet dishonesty destroys relationships and bitterness begins to rise. We begin to assume and to develop hidden agendas. We have hurt feelings that we're holding down. It finally begins to fester and we stop trusting each other and soon begin to doubt that person and their actions and the result is that relationships begin to suffer.

Proverbs 28:23 says *Correct someone, and afterward he will appreciate it more than flattery.* The alternative to being truthful and honest in a relationship, is to play games. This is when people say one thing when they mean another. They hint and they make suggestions but they never come out and say, "You're not meeting my needs!" or "I'm not meeting your needs!" or "We've got a problem!"

So we are left wondering why someone is not as close to us the way we might like them to be. To get victory, we need to deal with it, face it head on and be honest. Don't feel bad, just remember that a sharp tongue is no indication of a keen mind. But a sharp tongue can be used, if tempered with love and respect.

But there is a lesson here and that is if we are hesitant to speak the truth because of fear of an angry response then we need to look at the third truth in this equation. First we need to think before we speak, then we need to always tell the truth and now the third and most powerful part of the whole deal and that is

3. ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Although we are mainly in Proverbs for our learning and growth session today, I was reminded of a passage in Ephesians 4:14-16 concerning this issue which says *We must stop acting like children. We must not let deceitful people trick us by their false teachings, which are like winds that toss us around from place to place. **Love should always make us tell the truth.** Then we will grow in every way and be more like Christ, the head of the body. Christ holds it together and makes all of its parts work perfectly, as it grows and becomes strong because of love.*

This is the KEY. Don't use truth as a club. Proverbs 12:18, says *Careless words stab like a sword, but wise words bring healing.* We can wound people or we can heal by the words we speak. Scalpel or sledge? You know the results. Healing or hurting!

Have you ever heard someone justify their insensitivity by calling it being straightforward? "I just say what I feel." "I just speak what's on my mind!" Actually, that's really very tactless and insensitive and is not a virtue at all, but actually a vice.

The Bible says you are to speak the truth in love. Everything we do is to be done in love and it doesn't matter how much we know, if we do not know enough to be gentle and loving when we speak, then we are really ignorant spiritually. Actually we are not spiritual but just noisy.

Hear God's word once again from I Corinthians 13: 1-3 *If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate. If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing. If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.*

Proverbs 15:4 reminds us that *A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue breaks the spirit.* **Goodness and graciousness go together. The good person is the gracious person.**

Don't forget, gentle words cause life and health. When we confront we show that we care enough to confront but we are to confront in love because the words we use in the confrontation need to cause life and health.

The story is told of a pastor being in a hospital room with a wife and doctor and a man who had been in a coma for several months. The doctor said to the wife, "He's never going to come out of it. It's hopeless." And he walked out of the room.

That pastor then walked over to the man in a coma, got close to his face and said, "John, I know you've heard what the doctor said. But he's wrong. You are going to make it. You're going to come out of this coma. I don't care what the doctor said, you are going to make it!" They said that tears began to well up in the sides of the man's eyes and run down his cheeks. The man did recover and is active in a church today. When asked, He said the turning point in his recovery were those loving words, "You're going to make it!" All of a sudden I wanted to live, he said. *"Gentle words cause life and health."*

Proverbs 12:25 *Worry can rob you of happiness, but kind words will cheer you up.* **Thought:** Appreciation is thanking, recognition is seeing, encouragement is bringing hope to the future. **Remember Barnabas.** His nickname was "the Encourager". Can you think of a better epitaph for your tombstone than if it were to say "the Encourager -- he lifted people up."

You can be assured that you're going to meet a lot of people this week and every one of them is having a tough time in some area. So be kind to everybody. Speak a word of encouragement to them, don't give a put down or sarcasm, don't tease them with a put down statement. Build them up. Speak the truth in love because an encouraging word does wonders.

Some questions to ask so you can know if you are making progress in this area might be. How often do I encourage others? Am I giving more strokes than pokes? What am I doing more nagging or bragging?

If you are a person who has a sharp critical tongue and who thinks you are simply being open and honest, then maybe you want to rethink your position in light of the scripture and today's lesson. You may be honest and open, but are you spiritual?

The Bible teaches that our words are the window of our soul. The Bible teaches that our words reveal our character, our words say who we really are.

Matthew 12:34,35 reminds us with these words, *You snakes! You are evil people, so how can you say anything good? The mouth speaks the things that are in the heart. Good people have good things in their hearts, and so they say good things. But evil people have evil in their hearts, so they say evil things.*

The things that come out of our mouth really comes out of our heart. The problem is not our tongue. The problem is our heart. We say hurtful things because inside we're hurting. We need a new heart and the good news is God specializes in heart transplants. Jesus said, I came to give you a new heart and to heal your hurt, so you'll stop hurting others. He wants to heal our insecurities so we'll stop putting down others. God wants to heal our hurts so you can stop hurting others with the way you talk.

So next time we say something mean and hateful, curt and snotty we are just revealing what we are feeling inside. It is not that we are being open and honest like we try and get people to think. How about you my friend, how is your speech as you use it with others? Are you being truthful while at the same time telling the truth and telling that truth in love? Tongue control requires attention to five things: To who you speak, of whom you speak, and how and when and where. You do know don't you that not to speak ill requires only silence.

In closing I would like for you to consider letting Jesus help you with your tongue and since the things that come out of our mouth really come out of our heart why not ask Jesus to occupy that special place in your heart so you can control that other special part, your tongue?

To do that just read the following and follow what it says. You will be glad you did and so will others.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)