

Prov. 17:4-5, 7-9, 20, 27-28: An evildoer listens to wicked lips, & a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue
⁵ Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished . . . ⁷ Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince. ⁸ A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers. ⁹ Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends . . . ²⁰ A man of crooked heart does not discover good, & one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity . . . ²⁷ Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, & he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. ²⁸ Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

Intro: God's wisdom in Proverbs teaches you how to use words for the glory of God: Jas. 3:1-10: Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large & are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, & set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast & bird, of reptile & sea creature, can be tamed & has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord & Father, & with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing & cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Your words come from your heart: Matt. 12:33-37: Either make the tree good & its fruit good, or make the tree bad & its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? **For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, & the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, & by your words you will be condemned. [Think about the worse things that have ever come out of your mouth.] **GOSPEL!**

Through Jesus Christ, God changes your heart so that what comes out of your mouth pleases God.

1. God's Wise Children Tell The Truth

Prov. 17:4: An evildoer listens to wicked lips, & a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.

Prov. 17:7: Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.

Prov. 17:20: A man of crooked heart does not discover good, & one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.

a. God is the God of truth: Isa. 45:19: I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right; **Isa. 65:16:** he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth; **Num. 23:19:** God is not man, that he should lie; **Heb. 6:18:** it is impossible for God to lie

b. Wicked liars listen to wicked liars: Prov. 17:4: An evildoer listens to wicked lips, & a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.

Eric Lane: There will always be people who spread lies & malicious gossip because this will always attract an audience . . . Ahab listened to false prophets because they told him what he wanted to hear . . . Jeremiah found the people would not listen to his warnings but only the flattery of the false prophets . . . Today the world grasps at false teaching because it accords with its own views, flatters its pride, & encourages its irresponsibility.

- **2 Tim. 4:3-4:** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, & will turn away from listening to the truth & wander off into myths.

- **1 Jn. 4:5:** They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, & the world listens to them.

- Is there anyone/anything you are listening to, not b/c they are godly, but b/c they tell you what you want to hear?

- **Bishop Hall:** I cannot stop other men's mouths from speaking ill, I will either open my mouth to reprove it; or else I will stop mine ears from hearing it, & let him see in my face, that he has no room in my heart.

c. Fools don't speak with moral excellence & godly rulers don't tell lies: Prov. 17:7: Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.

- Fine speech here is speech of honesty, truth, & integrity – speech of moral excellence. This kind of speech is not found in fools: those who reject God, hate God, & blaspheme God.

- And the prince, possibly a political leader, but certainly one of honorable character, does not tell lies.

- **Isa. 32:5-7:** The fool will no more be called noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable. For the fool speaks folly, & his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, & to deprive the thirsty of drink. As for the scoundrel – his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.

d. Things won't end well for those with wicked hearts & lying tongues: Prov. 17:20: A man of crooked heart does not discover good, & one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.

Matt. 15:17-20: Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach & is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, & this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person.

Prov. 8:8: All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

Prov. 16:20: Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, & blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.

Prov. 8:13: The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride & arrogance & the way of evil and perverted speech I hate

Prov. 11:20: Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the LORD, but those of blameless ways are his delight.

Prov. 10:31: The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.

Rev. 21:8: But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, & all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire & sulfur, which is the second death.

e. Jesus is the truth: Jn. 14:6; Jn. 7:45-46: The officers then came to the chief priests & Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"

- **Matt. 24:35:** Heaven & earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

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2. God's Wise Children Don't Mock The Poor, Rejoice In Pain, Or Make Or Take Bribes

Prov. 17:5: Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

Prov. 17:8: A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.

a. God's wise children don't mock the poor: Prov. 17:5: Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker

Commentator: This proverb is an interesting one especially in the light of the numerous proverbs that ridicule the poor (6:6-11; 10:4-5). Close examination shows that it is not their poverty that is being ridiculed, but the foolish, lazy, behavior that got them there. [Proverbs] recognizes other causes of poverty beyond the control of the poor, such as injustice (13:23). This is why it is so dangerous to ridicule the poor; they may be poor through no fault of their own.

1) God has made everyone in His own image: **Gen. 1:27:** So God created man in his own image

2) God is ultimately sovereign over the rich & poor (yes, man is responsible): **1 Sam. 2:7-8:** The LORD makes poor & makes rich; he brings low & he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes & inherit a seat of honor.

3) God's wise children don't mock others, but love others &, in so doing, love God: **Matt. 25:40:** the King will

answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

- **Rom. 12:15:** Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

b. God’s wise children are not glad at those calamities which cause the innocent to become poor:

Prov. 17:5: Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

But what about?: Prov. 11:10: When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, & when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness.

- But we are not to rejoice at the hardship of innocent people & especially not of our brothers & sisters in Christ.

John Kitchen: God Himself vows to bring punishment upon such folk [mockers]. Historical examples include Amon (Ezek. 25:3-7) & Edom (Ezek. 35:12-15; Obad. 12) in their response to the hardship of God’s people.

Remember Jesus Who wept over Jerusalem! Remember Jesus Who came to proclaim good news to the poor & gave His life for poor sinners like you & like me! **2 Cor. 8:9:** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

c. God’s wise children don’t take bribes: Prov. 17:8: A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.

- This proverb is simply stating a fact that bribes often work & get you what you want. **One:** “The bribe works like a charm.” “Money talks.”

But this doesn’t make it right: **Deut. 16:19:** You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, & you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise & subverts the cause of the righteous.

- **John Kitchen:** That this [Prov. 17:8] is a simple observation of fact & not an endorsement is witnessed by the fact that, elsewhere in Scripture, bribes are universally condemned; in the Law (Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; 27:25), the Historical Books (1 Sam. 12:3), Wisdom Literature (Ps. 15:5; Eccles. 7:7) & the Prophets (Isa. 1:23; Amos 5:12). Elsewhere, the Proverbs also condemn their use (Prov. 15:27; 28:16), even here in this chapter 17:

- **Prov. 17:23:** The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.

Part of being wise means knowing the ways of the world – knowing the enemy & their ways – bribing!

Remember when the devil sought to bribe Jesus? **Matt. 4:1-11:** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days & forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came & said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city & set him on the pinnacle of the temple & said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain & showed him all the kingdoms of the world & their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down & worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God & him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

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3. God’s Wise Children Are Careful And Loving With Their Words

Prov. 17:9: Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.

Prov. 17:27: Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, & he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

Prov. 17:28: Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

a. God's wise children forgive, forget, & force silence about the matter: Prov. 17:9: Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.

- **Eph. 4:32:** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Four Promises Of Forgiveness (Peacemaker Ministries): 1) I will not dwell on this incident; 2) I will not bring up this incident again & use it against you; 3) I will not talk to others about this incident; 4) I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

b. God's wise children love with their words: THINK: T: Is what I'm saying True? **H:** Is it Helpful? **I:** Is it Inspiring? **N:** Is it Necessary? **K:** Is it Kind?

Eric Lane: Love "keeps no record of wrongs . . . does not delight in evil . . . always protects" (1 Cor. 13:5-7). So it is very discreet about what it passes on. One bursting to tell something he has heard will consider the people concerned, especially if they are close friends & will cover over an offense. This is not to be taken to the extent of "concealing evidence" in the case of a crime. Nor is it to be applied to sin which is serious enough to bring the church or gospel into disrepute.

c. God's wise children exercise self control & are careful before they speak: Prov. 17:27: Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, & he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

- **Jas. 1:19-20:** Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

- **Prov. 14:29:** Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

- **Prov. 15:18:** A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

- **Prov. 16:32:** Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, & he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city

- **Gal. 5:22-23:** the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Prov. 17:28: Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

- **Derek Kidner:** The dry advice of 28 is not purely ironical: the fool who takes it is no longer a complete fool.

- **John Kitchen:** Two warnings emerge. First, that not all who appear silent & thoughtful are in fact just that. Second, measured words are best, no matter what your proximity to wisdom. Even Job's friends appeared caring & wise while they remained silent (Job 2:13). Once their mouths were opened, however, Job sarcastically lamented: "O that you would be completely silent, & that it would become your wisdom!" (Job 13:5).

As Christians, you should generally avoid commenting on things you know nothing about (social media; Ramsey)

Jesus knows everything about everything! Yet, He always exercised perfect self-control in His speech & words & everything else: He kept silent so that you might be saved: **Isa. 53:7:** He was oppressed, & he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, & like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [Hallelujah! What a Savior!]

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Christ Jesus Made And Rules The Tongue
He's God Of Truth – Truth From Him Sprung
He Never Sinned With Heart Or Tongue
Kept Silent When Foes Cursed And Swung
Took No Bribe, Nor Mocked, Nor Stung
But Covers All Offense And Hung
With Love Upon That Cross And Flung
All Our Sins Away Among
The Deepest Ocean Floors Are Slung

All Because God's Wrath Him Stung
He Died And Rose Again And Sprung
Up From The Tomb – Brings New Life Young
By Faith Alone To Him We've Clung
He Changes Hearts And Changed Our Tongue
We Count All Loss And Filth And Dung
Compared To Christ Who For Us Hung
His Praises Now Forever Sung
For He's Our God Who Healed Our Tongue!