

How to Make Life Work



WISDOM FROM PROVERBS

Wisdom for your Words

Proverbs 10



Proverbs 10:11-12

¹¹ The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

¹² Hatred stirs up conflict,
but love covers over all wrongs.



Proverbs 10:13-14

¹³ Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning,
but a rod is for the back of one who has no sense.

¹⁴ The wise store up knowledge,
but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.



Proverbs 10:18-19

¹⁸ Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips
and spreads slander is a fool.

¹⁹ Sin is not ended by multiplying words,
but the prudent hold their tongues.



Proverbs 10:20-21

²⁰ The tongue of the righteous is choice silver,
but the heart of the wicked is of little value.

²¹ The lips of the righteous nourish many,
but fools die for lack of sense.



Proverbs 10:31-32

³¹ From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom,
but a perverse tongue will be silenced.

³² The lips of the righteous know what finds favor,
but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.



Outline

1. The power of our words
2. Guidance for our words
3. The transformation of our words



1. The power of our words

Selected Proverbs



1. The power of our words

Power for good

- Prov. 10:11: The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.



1. The power of our words

Power for good

- Prov. 10:20: The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.



1. The power of our words

Power for good

- Prov. 10:21: The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of sense.



1. The power of our words

Power for evil

- Prov. 10:14: The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.



1. The power of our words

Power for evil

- Sins of the tongue in Proverbs 10: violence, hatred, conflict (vv. 11-12); lying, slander (v. 18), perverse speech (vv. 31-320)



1. The power of our words

Power for evil

- Prov. 12:18: The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
- Prov. 25:18: Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is one who gives false testimony against a neighbor.



1. The power of our words

Power for evil

- Prov. 16:27-28: A scoundrel plots evil, and on their lips it is like a scorching fire.²⁸ A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.



SINFUL Speech



JOHN FLAVEL



Gracious words are bread to feed, and water to refresh the souls of others. A sanctified tongue is as a tree of life . . . But the tongues of some men break loose from under all the laws and rules of both reason and religion, and serve only to vent the froth and filth, which abound in the heart . . . The tongue moves lightly, but falls heavily; it strikes soft, but wounds deep.

—John Flavel



1. The power of our words

Power of life and death

- Prov. 18:21: The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.



1. The power of our words

Application

- For the next week, take a daily inventory of your words



2. Guidance for our words

Selected Proverbs



2. Guidance for our words

Wise words are faithful and true

- Prov. 24:26: An honest [straight/straightforward] answer is like a kiss on the lips.
- Prov. 19:1: Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse [crooked, ESV].



2. Guidance for our words

Wise words are measured and few

- Prov. 10:19: Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.
- Prov. 17:27-28: The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. ²⁸ Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.



2. Guidance for our words

Wise words are gentle and calm

- Prov. 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- Prov. 15:4: The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.
- Prov. 25:15: Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.

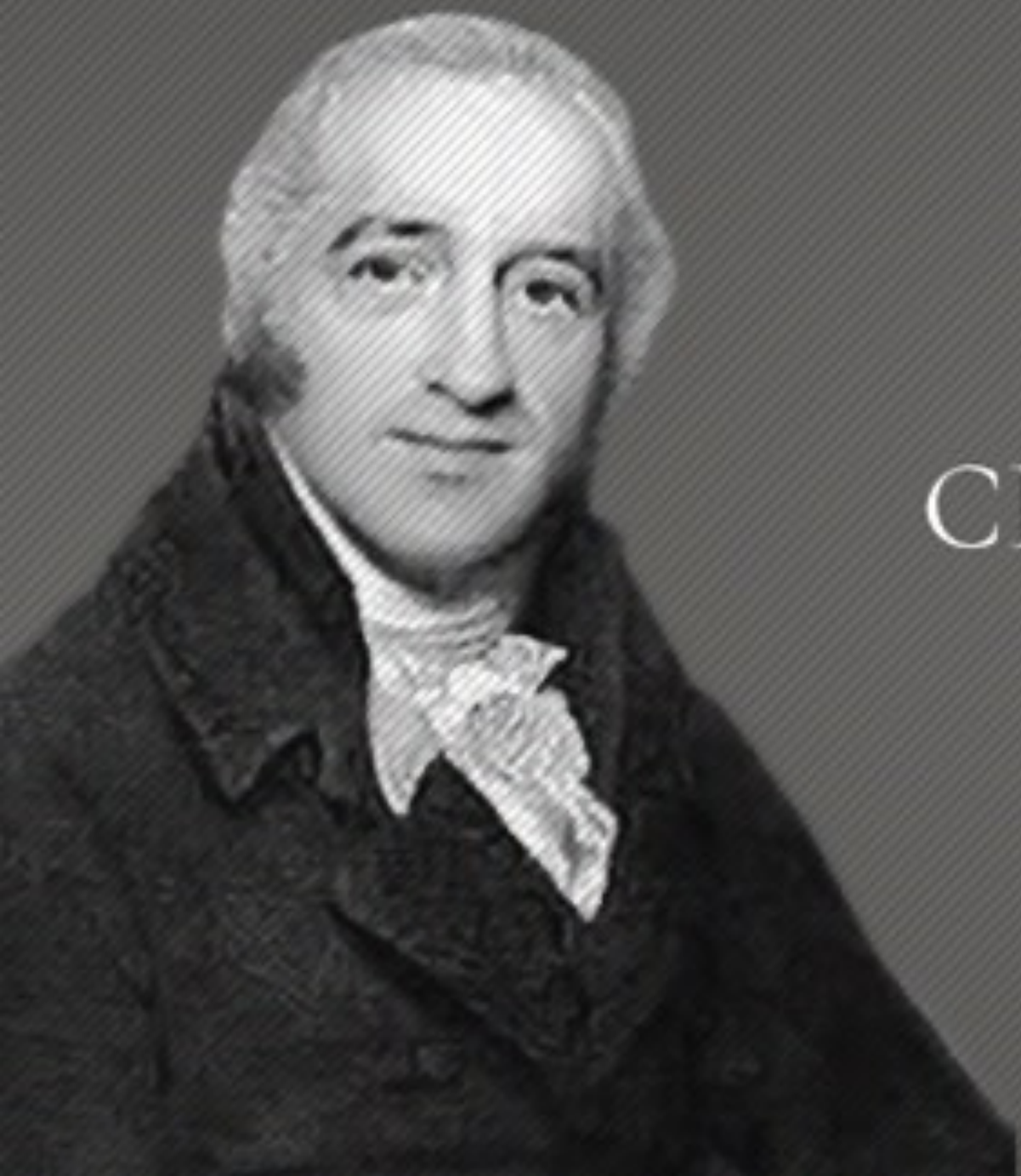


2. Guidance for our words

Wise words are well-chosen and well-timed

- Prov. 15:23: A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!
- Prov. 25:11-12 (ESV): A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.





CHARLES SIMEON

1759–1836

2. Guidance for our words

Application

- Ask the Lord to teach you how to speak with wisdom. Begin applying specific principles from Proverbs in your conversations.



3. The transformation of our words

Selected Scriptures



3. The transformation of our words

Trust and follow Christ, the incarnate word

- 1 Peter 2:21-24: To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed.



3. The transformation of our words

Receive and internalize the Scriptures, the written word

- James 1:19-21: My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.





The work of the Word inaugurates the Christian life, but it also sustains its progress. My tongue is ongoingly cleansed and transformed by (if I may so express it) what comes from God's tongue. As the heart hears with open ears the Word of God again and again, it is renewed and begins to produce a transformed tongue. The principle is this: what comes out of our mouths is more and more determined by what has come out of "the mouth of God."



The sanctification of the tongue is a work in us that is driven by the Word of God coming to us as we hear it and indwelling us as we receive it . . .

The most important single aid to my ability to use my tongue for the glory of Jesus is allowing the Word of God to dwell in me so richly that I cannot speak with any other accent. When I do, the result is 'teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing, and, in word or deed, doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father' (Col. 3:16–17).

—Sinclair Ferguson

3. The transformation of our words

Application

- Commit yourself to the daily intake and internalization of the word.



Summary

1. The power of our words
2. Guidance for our words
3. The transformation of our words

