

PROVERBS

Proverbs: Talking and Relating: Syllabus

Notes —

Class #1:

- I. Course Introduction.
- II. Speech:
 - A. The Importance of Words.

Class #2:

- II. Speech:
 - B. Sometimes Silence is Golden (is very valuable)!
 - C. Count Your Words Carefully.
 - D. Styles of Speech.

Class #3:

- II. Speech:
 - D. Styles of Speech (cont.)
- III. Relationships:
 - A. Relationships as a Neighbor.

Class #4:

- III. Relationships:
 - B. True Friends.
 - C. The Family Relationship.

Class #5:

- III. Relationships:
 - C. The Family Relationship (cont.);
- IV. Conclusion to Talking and Relating.
 - Exam.

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Proverbs : Exam

Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) Show two ways in which silence can display wisdom (pp. 176, 177).
- 2) Describe the wise way of speech (pp. 181-183).
- 3) Use the book of Proverbs to make some points about parenting (pp. 189, 190).

Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) Use Prov 6:16-19 to show the importance of words (p. 175).
- 2) Use two Scriptures to make two different points about what you should do with your mouth (p. 177).
- 3) Define the “foolish way” of speech (p. 180).
- 4) Give two points from Proverbs that show how to be a good neighbor (p. 184).
- 5) Give two points from Proverbs concerning important things for friends to avoid (p. 186).
- 6) In 2-3 sentences describe the Proverbs 31 woman (p. 188).

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Proverbs: Talking and Relating

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I. Course Introduction.

A. The Book of Proverbs.

1. William Arnot, in his book Studies in Proverbs, says: “Considering how great a place proverbs hold in human language, and how great a part they act in human life, it was to be expected that the Spirit would use that instrument, among others, in conveying the mind of God to men. Proverbs are both in human life and in the Bible. They are in the Bible because they are in human life.”¹
2. It is true. The Book of Proverbs is a very practical book in its form and in its contents. A proverb, by its very nature, is a practical expression of life.
3. Proverbs speak of everyday topics in the context of everyday examples. They never grow old, because more or less, life remains the same.
 - a. Just as God is the same today, yesterday, and forever (Heb 13:8), the principles that govern His world are the same today, just as they were 3,000 years ago when the book of Proverbs was written.
 - b. We can benefit greatly from these ancient writings when we realize that there is “nothing new under the sun” (Eccl 1:9).

B. Contents of this Course.

1. We will study the general theme of the Book of Proverbs, which is Wisdom.
2. In this course, we will study what Proverbs has to teach us about having Wisdom in two areas of our lives:
 - a. Speech (the use of the mouth).
 - b. Relationships.

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II. Speech.

A. The Importance of Words.

1. Link between Speech and Wisdom.
 - a. Wisdom and speech are naturally linked together.

Author's Illustration:

Speech is to wisdom what computer output is to a computer program.

Insert Your Illustration:

- b. Proverbs teaches that wisdom will affect what we say and how we say it. A person with wisdom understands that he is responsible for the words he says.
 2. Speech is a significant aspect of life.
 - a. Speech is significant in Creation.
 - 1) We come from the one great Speaker who **“spoke”** the world into being (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24).
 - 2) God **“spoke”** to man as soon as He made him (Gen 1:28) and has never stopped speaking to him (2 Pt 1:21).
 - b. Speech is significant in redemption.
 - 1) God speaks to us in His Son (Heb 1:2).
 - 2) His son is the **“word”** of God (Jn 1:1).

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- c. Speech is significant in the Book of Proverbs.
 - 1) We can see this throughout the book, but it can be seen most clearly in 6:16-19.
 - 2) There is a list of the seven abominations to the Lord. This list represents the things that God hates! Notice that three of the seven have to do with **speech**.
 - a) A lying **Tongue** (vs. 17a).
 - b) A false witness who **Utters** lies (vs. 19a).
 - c) One who **Spreads** strife among brothers (vs. 19b).
- 3. The power of the tongue.
 - a. Proverbs does not underestimate the power of the tongue. However, society does underestimate the power of the tongue. It promotes a philosophy of many words and liberal speech.
 - b. The tongue must be used very carefully. It can be used negatively or positively.
 - 1) Death and life are in the power of the tongue (18:21).
 - 2) It can bring pain or it can bring healing (12:18).
 - a) David Wright, in his book Wisdom as a Lifestyle, says: “Words can be missiles with deadly shrapnel to rip and tear, bombs to annihilate those they hit. Or they can be rivers of clear, soothing water, spices to add flavor to life, medicine to help heal the injuries of those around us.”²
- 4. The influence of words.
 - a. The going forth of words can be compared to a **scorching fire** (16:27) that can **separate intimate friends** (vs. 28).
 - b. Words can result in satisfaction (12:14).
 - c. Words can feed many (10:21).

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- d. Words can destroy a neighbor (11:9).
- e. The influence of words can be very subtle. Words of flattery can affect us in a subtle way (see 7:21, 29:5).
 - 1) Words can cause us to make bad decisions.
 - 2) Words can cause us to desire wrong things.

Discussion Point

Use the previous concepts to promote discussion about speech, words, and tongue.

B. Sometimes Silence is Golden (is very valuable)! It can display wisdom in two ways:

- 1. Silence displays wisdom in what we do not say.
 - a. Consider the cry of Job in Job 13:5. Also consider Ps 39:1. Shutting our mouth is often the wisest thing we can do.
 - b. “Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise” (17:28). What irony!
- 2. Silence displays wisdom in what we listen to.
 - a. The less we say, the more we can listen. The more we listen, the more we can learn.
 - 1) James exhorts us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak” (Jms 1:19).
 - 2) The Preacher realizes that there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Eccl 3:7).
 - b. We can not consider wise speech until we consider wise hearing (4:1).

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- c. Hearing or listening is the function that consumes most of our time in the communication process.
- 1) Hearing is necessarily linked with speech (4:20).
 - 2) Hearing is critically linked to wisdom (8:33).
 - 3) Listening is a mark of a wise man (12:15).
 - 4) Listening is not simply the passive side of communication. It is active.
 - a) Listening must be selective (15:31).
 - b) Listening must be receptive (2:1).
 - c) Listening must be attentive (4:1; 5:1).
 - d) Listening must result in steadfast action (5:7).

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C. Count Your Words Carefully.

1. Avoid an abundance of words.
 - a. Too many words lead to sin (10:19).
 - b. Our words should be few (Eccl 5:2).
2. Stewardship of your mouth.
 - a. Guard your mouth (21:23; also see 13:3).
 - b. Restrain your mouth (10:19).
 - c. Practice patience with your mouth (29:20).
 - d. Put a hand over your mouth, instead of putting your “foot in your mouth” (which means to contradict yourself or say something that is very inappropriate) (30:32; also see Job 21:5).

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3. Stewardship of words.

- a. In the Apocryphal writings, Sirach gives this suggestion: Make balances and scales for your words and make a door and bolt for your mouth. Beware, lest you err with your tongue (Sir 28:25, 26).
- b. We must weigh our words. We cannot speak cheap words. We must consider the worth of a word before we speak it. We must be wise stewards of our words.

Author's Illustration:

When I was a child, my grandfather told me not to speak too much. He told me to save my words, because I only had a certain amount that I would be able to speak in my life. The wisdom in this is clear. Use your words as if you had a limit on the number you could speak. Choose them carefully. Be a good steward.

Insert Your Illustration:

- c. David Wright sums up this idea best when he says: “We think much about physical resources and guard these jealously. According to Solomon, our word resources must be just as jealously guarded, just as wisely used. There is a right and a wrong way to spend this precious commodity. God is vitally interested in what pours forth from our lips because, like the desire for fellowship, this power of language is an expression of His image in us. Language is not to be taken lightly; talk is not cheap.”³

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D. Styles of Speech. David Wright organizes the various styles of speech found in Proverbs into four categories.⁴

1. The adulterous way.
 - a. This is the way of the manipulator.
 - 1) It is the style of a crafty and deceptive salesman.
 - 2) He uses words in a creative style. However, he is insincere (5:3, 4).
 - b. The adulterous speaker is an expert in the use of flattery and persuasion. They are his two greatest weapons.
 - 1) Adulterous persuasion attempts to establish personal credibility (7:14).
 - 2) It tries to convince others of personal superiority (7:15).
 - 3) It takes advantage of the weakness of others (7:16-20).
 - 4) It focuses on making offers (7:16-20).
 - c. This style of speech is very subtle. It is so subtle that it can be used without realizing it. We must challenge ourselves. Do we use this style of speech?
 - 1) Do we use our ability to persuade others to get what we want?
 - 2) Do we use flattery to prepare the person to be persuaded?
 - 3) Do we really care about our listeners? Or do we only care about our own personal interests?

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2. The foolish way.
 - a. This is the way of the person who is undisciplined with his words.
 - 1) It is the way that does not count words.
 - 2) The foolish talker babbles endlessly. He conducts empty conversations.
 - 3) He is not in control of what he says. He is not disciplined.
 - b. The foolish speaker makes promises that he later regrets (6:2).
 - c. His babbling leads to his downfall (10:8, 19; 13:3).
 - d. His lack of control results in gossip (12:23).
 - e. He shames himself because he is impatient (18:13).
 - f. He rejects wisdom (23:9). It is useless to him (26:7, 9).
3. The treacherous way.
 - a. This is the hostile and violent way.
 - 1) Like the adulterous way, its goal is to destroy.
 - 2) However, instead of being deceptive it is brutally direct (11:9).
 - b. The treacherous speaker is harsh and rude (12:18; 16:27).
 - 1) When he is more withdrawn as a “whisperer,” it is only for the purpose of fueling a fire (26:20).
 - 2) Yes, James dramatically shows us that “the tongue is a fire” and that it has the potential to be a very negative part of the body (Jms 3:5, 6).

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- 3) The tongue sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell through:
 - a) Boasting (25:14).
 - b) Lying (6:17; 12:22; 26:28).
 - c) False witnessing (25:18).
 - d) Gossiping (20:19).
 - e) Backbiting (25:23).
 - f) Tale bearing (11:13).
 - g) Flattering (26:28; 28:23; 29:5).
4. The wise way.
 - a. This is the opposite of the adulterous, foolish, and treacherous ways.
 - 1) Opposite of the adulterous way.
 - a) Honesty is nowhere to be found in the insincere adulterous style of speech.
 - b) Honesty is the cornerstone of the wise style of speech (4:24; 12:17; 16:23).

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2) Opposite of the foolish way.

a) The fool speaks without thinking. The wise speaker thinks before he speaks (15:28; 16:23).

(1) Words are counted and weighed.

(2) He knows when to be silent (11:13).

b) The foolish speaker cannot control himself. The wise man exercises restraint with his words.

(1) He does not feel compelled to add his views to every part of a discussion.

(2) Thus, his words carry more weight when he does speak.

c) The fool babbles. He does not consider when to speak. The wise speaker understands the importance of timing.

(1) His speech is pertinent and relevant (15:23 and 25:11).

(2) A point may make no impression at all unless it is spoken on the right occasion at the right time. Even with proverbs, part of being wise is knowing when to use them.

3) Opposite of the treacherous way.

a) The treacherous style is a violent, harsh, and hostile style. The wise style is gentle.

b) A wise man speaks with a **cool spirit** (17:27).

(1) A cool spirit gives time to listen (18:13).

(2) A cool spirit allows tempers to cool (15:1).

(3) A cool spirit is effective and powerful (25:15).

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- b. Finally, the wise style of speech serves to edify (12:25) and to heal (12:18; 4:20-22).
- 1) We must constantly check our speaking habits. We must ask ourselves some challenging questions.
 - a) Are we being wise with our tongues?
 - b) Are we using words to edify and to heal?
 - c) Do we complain too much?
 - d) Do we too often fall to the temptation of speaking poorly of another person?
 - e) Do we talk too much?
 - f) Do our words hurt other people?
 - g) Do we add meaningful content to conversations when we do talk?

Discussion Point

Discuss your personal experience of using the four styles of speech.
Make a decision today to use your words more wisely.

III. Relationships.

A. Relationships as a Neighbor.

1. Introduction.
 - a. Relationships.
 - 1) Relationships are important because it is through relationships with others that we can practice our walk with God.
 - 2) The quality of our relationships with others is an expression of the quality of our walk with God.

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- b. Neighbors.
 - 1) Many people say that they do not have a problem getting along with most people.
 - 2) Yet, these same people can not get along with “the guy next door” (their neighbor).
2. Proverbs gives instructions on how to be a good neighbor.
 - a. A good neighbor is not a “big mouth.” He is trustworthy and can keep certain things confidential (11:12).
 - b. He does not plan to hurt his neighbor (3:29).
 - c. He does not spread strife (25:8, 9).
 - d. He is a good example and guide (12:26).
 - e. He is available (27:10).
 - f. He is kind even to those who do not like him (25:21, 22).
 - g. He is generous in his judgments (24:17).
 - h. He uses tact (25:17).
 - 1) He respects the feelings of others. He does not force himself upon his neighbor. He does not overstay his welcome.
 - 2) He is sensitive. He does not become a nuisance. He does not cross over social boundaries.
3. Love is the message.
 - a. The qualities of a good neighbor are qualities of love.
 - b. We are reminded of the second greatest commandment: love your neighbor.

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B. True Friends.

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1. Introduction to Friendship.
 - a. How many really close friends do you have? If you are like most people, then you probably do not have more than a handful of intimately close friends (“best friends”).
 - b. A best friend is a person with whom you have shared your deepest secrets. It is the person who has been with you through the highs and lows of your life. Descriptive words of a strong friendship are:
 - 1) Loyalty.
 - 2) Consistency.
 - 3) Unconditional commitment.
 - c. Proverbs recognizes that a strong friendship can not be something superficial.
 - 1) Proverbs speaks of “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (18:24).
 - 2) It speaks of a friend who “loves at all times” (17:17).
 - 3) It realizes that someone who is a friend because of your riches (14:20) or gifts (19:6) may not be a friend when the hard times come.

Discussion Point

Discuss testimonies or examples that reflect true friendship.

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2. Friendship.

a. Good counsel in friendship.

- 1) Good counsel amongst friends may take the form of guidance, exhortation, or confirmation (27:9).
- 2) Good counsel amongst friends may also take the form of challenge and rebuke (27:17). Friends must help each other to grow even if it hurts.
- 3) A true friendship should be able to offer and accept both types of counsel.

b. Honesty in friendship.

- 1) A good friend is willing to jeopardize the friendship to help his friend. He will be the one who tells his friend what others know, but are not willing to say. His love goes beyond his desire not to be in an uncomfortable situation (27:6).
- 2) Temporarily, the tolerance of superficial friends may be desired. However, ultimately, the sincerity of a close friend will be appreciated (28:23).

c. Important things for friends to avoid.

- 1) Friends must avoid slandering each other (16:28). Talking behind the other's back, ridiculing, and whispering has destroyed many good friendships.
- 2) Friends must forgive and forget. They must not continue to refer to something that has already been forgiven (17:9).
 - a) The lack of complete forgiveness quickly turns into bitterness. Bitterness turns into anger and hostility. Hostility turns into rebellion. Rebellion turns into apathy. Apathy results in death. In this case, the relationship dies.
 - b) This process has destroyed many good friendships...and marriages!

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C. The Family Relationship.

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1. Introduction to the Family Relationship.
 - a. The importance of the family.
 - 1) Many proverbs relate to life in the family.
 - 2) The family is the foundation of many other institutions.
 - a) The Church is made up of families.
 - b) The State is made up of families.
 - c) When society begins to fall apart, it is because the family unit has already fallen apart.
 - 3) Derek Kidner in his book The Proverbs, says: “The family holds in Proverbs the pivotal place in society, which it received in the Sinai Covenant...family loyalties come to life in the homely glimpses of children faithfully brought up, and parents joyfully united.”⁵
 - b. We will consider the topics of marriage and parenting.
2. The Marriage Relationship.
 - a. There is a very strong personal bond between husband and wife in the book of Proverbs.
 - 1) A broken marriage is described in 2:17 in terms of one partner leaving a “companion.” This word in Hebrew has a very intimate meaning. It can be translated “best friend” (see also Ps 55:13; Prov 16:28; 17:9; Jer 13:21; and Mic 7:5 for other uses of this word).
 - 2) This emphasis seems to point away from polygamy as a norm in Israel.
 - 3) It also seems to speak against the practice of considering women to be lower than men (seen in later Judaism).

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b. The wife.

- 1) The Proverbs 31 woman is a wife who is faithful to her husband.
- 2) The Proverbs 9:13-18 woman is a foolish wife who is not faithful to her husband.
- 3) The wife either creates a home or destroys the household (14:1; 18:22; 19:14; 12:4).
- 4) Wives are seen as collaborators with their husbands in the training of their children. They speak with one voice (1:8,9; 6:20; 31:1).

c. The husband.

- 1) The most repeated theme in Proverbs regarding marriage is encouragement for the husband to be loyal to his wife.
- 2) The husband is to be devoted to his wife.
 - a) Devotion should be the cause and the result of mutual satisfaction in the marriage relationship (5:15-20).
 - b) True intimacy is lost without the ribbon of loyalty that wraps up the gift of marriage.
 - c) Leroy Eims, in his book Wisdom From Above, says: “The joys of one’s own home, like the waters of one’s own well, are clean, pure, refreshing, and wholesome.”⁶
- 3) The abuse of the sex urge affects the family and family relationships.
 - a) A husband can destroy himself (6:32b).
 - b) He destroys his family.
- 4) Sanctity in marriage is suggested for our own benefit. It is logical to listen to the suggestion (6:32a).
- 5) To avoid the lips of the harlot that drip with honey, a husband must have lips that drip with knowledge (5:2, 3).

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3. The Parental Relationship.

a. Disciplining children.

- 1) Proverbs contains a serious doctrine of wisdom.
 - a) If wisdom is life itself (8:35, 36), then a hard way to life is better than an easy way to death (23:14 and 19:18).
 - b) We must talk about the idea of “tough love” (consider 13:24). Tough love means doing difficult things out of love, instead of compromising and giving in easily.
- 2) Without the rod, “**the foolishness in the heart of a child**” goes unchecked.
 - a) This results in shame for the family (29:15).
 - b) This results in death for the child (23:14).
- 3) Some people say that they do not spank their children because they love them. The truth is that they do not spank their children because of laziness and weakness, or from being deceived.

b. Instructing and training children.

- 1) Instruction should be more constant and effective than the use of the rod.
 - a) It is “**my teaching**” (3:1) that leads the child to “**the way he should go**” (22:6).
 - b) The whole book of Proverbs is prefaced by the request, “**Hear my son, your father’s instruction**” (1:8).
- 2) In general, training and instruction should provide direction.
- 3) Specifically, training and instruction should mold and form the character of a child.
- 4) The goal is to equip the child to walk down the road of life in a successful way (3:23; 4:8-12).

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c. The failure of parents.

- 1) It must be understood that training does not by itself create wisdom. The instruction must be received.
- 2) The conditional nature of this dynamic is clear in 2:1: “My son, **IF** you will receive my sayings.”
 - a) Proverbs gives instructions that must be received.
 - b) It does not give a recipe that is guaranteed.
 - c) Thus, Proverbs includes an extensive list of children who go astray (10:5; 15:20; 20:20; 29:3; 30:11, 17).
- 3) The failure of a parent is not necessarily in the lack of response from a child to wisdom. In the end, each individual must choose his own way.
- 4) The failure of a parent is in the neglect of instructing and enforcing (disciplining).
- 5) Derek Kidner concludes with these words: “While there are parents who have only themselves to thank for their shame (29:15), it is ultimately the person himself that must bear his own blame, for it is his attitude to wisdom, his consent given or withheld in face of temptation that sets his course.”⁷

Discussion Point

Take a few minutes to discuss key aspects of neighbor, friend and family relationships.

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IV. Conclusion to Talking and Relating.

Notes —

A. The Challenge of Proverbs.

1. The book of Proverbs is a very practical book. The topics that we have studied are very practical topics. They involve us with other people.
2. How will we respond? The teaching is clear. We do have a map. The question that remains, “Will we follow it?” (2:1-5).

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Proverbs - Talking and Relating: ENDNOTES

¹William Arnot, Studies in Proverbs (Grand Rapids: Kregal Publications, 1978), p. 17.

²David Wright, Wisdom as a Lifestyle (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter, 1987), p. 112.

³Wright, p. 113.

⁴Ibid., p. 117.

⁵Derek Kidner, The Proverbs (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1964), p. 52.

⁶Leroy Eims, Wisdom From Above (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1978), p. 108.

⁷Kidner, p. 50.