

A Study of the Wisdom Literature

(OT Survey Lesson 291—Wisdom about Speech)

Introduction: No part of life requires more wisdom than our speech. Solomon offers many wise statements in helping us mature in this area.

Lesson aim: To learn to use wisdom in speaking to others.

Beware of misuses of speech

Keep your promises and your vows

6:1-5 MY son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, Have given a pledge for a stranger, 2 *If* you have been snared with the words of your mouth, Have been caught with the words of your mouth, 3 Do this then, my son, and deliver yourself; Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, Go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor. 4 Do not give sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids; 5 Deliver yourself like a gazelle from *the hunter's* hand, And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

20:25 It is a snare for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" And after the vows to make inquiry.

25:14 *Like* clouds and wind without rain Is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely.

Avoid lying and slander

10:18 He who conceals hatred *has* lying lips, And he who spreads slander is a fool.

11:9 With *his* mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor, But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.

30:10 Do not slander a slave to his master, Lest he curse you and you be found guilty.

29:5 A man who flatters his neighbor Is spreading a net for his steps.

12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.

12:6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, But the mouth of the upright will deliver them.

26:28 A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin.

12:19 Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment.

12:17 He who speaks truth tells what is right, But a false witness, deceit.

14:5 A faithful witness will not lie, But a false witness speaks lies.

14:25 A truthful witness saves lives, But he who speaks lies is treacherous.

19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will not escape.

19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells lies will perish.

21:28 A false witness will perish, But the man who listens *to the truth* will speak forever.

19:28 A rascally witness makes a mockery of justice, And the mouth of the wicked spreads iniquity.

24:28 Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, And do not deceive with your lips.

20:19 He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue Is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death.

26:24-26 He who hates disguises *it* with his lips, But he lays up deceit in his heart. When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, For there are seven abominations in his heart. 26 *Though his* hatred covers itself with guile, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

Words can destroy and tear down

16:27 A worthless man digs up evil, While his words are as a scorching fire.

16:28 A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends.

16:30 He who winks his eyes *does so* to devise perverse things; He who compresses his lips brings evil to pass.

17:4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips, A liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.

17:9 He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

17:20 He who has a crooked mind finds no good, And he who is perverted in his language falls into evil.

25:23 The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.

26:17 *Like* one who takes a dog by the ears Is he who passes by *and* meddles with strife not belonging to him.
 26:18-19 Like a madman who throws Firebrands, arrows and death, 19 So is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, “Was I not joking?”
 26:20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.
 26:21 *Like* charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.
 26:22 The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.
 26:23 *Like* an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross Are burning lips and a wicked heart.
 26:2 Like a sparrow in *its* flitting, like a swallow in *its* flying, So a curse without cause does not alight.

Learning to keep quiet and to speak cautiously

10:19 When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.
 11:12 He who despises his neighbor lacks sense, But a man of understanding keeps silent.
 11:13 He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.
 13:3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
 29:20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles.
 15:28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.
 17:27 He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
 17:28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is *counted* prudent.
 16:1 The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
 25:15 By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, And a soft tongue breaks the bone.
 24:26 He kisses the lips Who gives a right answer.

The value and blessings of wise speech

A source of wisdom and knowledge

10:20 The tongue of the righteous is *as* choice silver, The heart of the wicked is *worth* little.
 20:15 There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing.
 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
 12:14 A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, And the deeds of a man’s hands will return to him.
 10:31 The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom, But the perverted tongue will be cut out.
 10:13-14 On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, But a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding. 14 Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.
 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for *his* back, But the lips of the wise will preserve them.
 22:12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, But He overthrows the words of the treacherous man.
 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of understanding.
 10:32 The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked, what is perverted.
 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, To turn aside from the snares of death.
 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.
 13:2 From the fruit of a man’s mouth he enjoys good, But the desire of the treacherous is violence.
 15:2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, But the mouth of fools spouts folly.
 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge, But the hearts of fools are not so.

A source of correction

25:12 *Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening ear.
 27:5 Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed.
 28:23 He who rebukes a man will afterward find *more* favor Than he who flatters with the tongue.

It is important to use tact when speaking

15:26 Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD, But pleasant words are pure.
 16:21 The wise in heart will be called discerning, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

16:23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Words can comfort and heal

12:18 There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

12:25 Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, But a good word makes it glad.

13:17 A wicked messenger falls into adversity, But a faithful envoy *brings* healing.

15:4 A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit.

15:30 Bright eyes gladden the heart; Good news puts fat on the bones.

25:11 *Like* apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances.

25:13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.

25:25 *Like* cold water to a weary soul, So is good news from a distant land.