

Remnant Life Church  
September 15, 2024  
**Learning to Speak Without Regret**  
Proverbs

Have you ever said something, and the second it was out of your mouth, you regretted it?

- There is likely not one person in this room who has not experienced that
- Perhaps many times...perhaps regularly...perhaps this morning
- The thing about words is once they are out there, you cannot take them back
  - You can make as many disclaimers as you want
  - You can apologize
  - You can say 'I didn't mean it that way' a thousand times
  - But they are still out there
  - And they can do serious damage whether you regret them or not
- Words can spread and be all-consuming
  - How many of you are familiar with the plant, Kudzu?
  - Kudzu was introduced from Japan into the United States at the Japanese pavilion in the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia
    - It was originally presented as a house plant but was soon utilized for soil erosion control due to how quickly it grows
    - The root system spreads very quickly and the leaves then grows very densely, smothering everything around it – from native plants to even trees
- Words can be like that
  - Your words can spread very quickly
  - They can also emotionally and mentally smother those who hear them
  - So be careful, remembering the wise adage, think before you speak

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings

- Not surprisingly, many have to do with the words we say
  - There are about 90 proverbs that refer to the words we say
  - And the words tongue, mouth, lips, and words appear over 150 times
- Words and your voice can be unbelievably soothing or incredibly irritating
  - Fran Drescher became famous and very wealthy utilizing a voice that was worse than fingernails being dragged across a chalkboard
  - On the other end, James Earl Jones died this past Monday, September 9
    - His voice was golden
    - A rich, melodic baritone
    - The voice of Darth Vader, Simba, and was once asked to recite, not sing, the National Anthem prior to the start of the 1993 MLB All-Star game at Camden Yards in Baltimore.
- While none of us have the beauty of a voice like that, we can learn to speak in love and with wisdom

1. Appreciate and understand the power of your words
  - a. **Proverbs 18:21** - *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*
  - b. Think back to a teacher, coach, parent, or friend and the power their words had in your life – even if you did not realize it at the time
    - i. Girl in my youth group (I was about 15) called me scrawny
    - ii. I have carried that label with me my entire life
  - c. But I have also been greatly encouraged by the words spoken by many people in my life and they were all very important
  - d. The Bible goes so far as to say that there is the power of life and death in your words
    - i. Why is that important to understand?
    - ii. Because you do not know the impact your words will have, so be careful
      1. My I be blunt?
        - a. Shooting your mouth off without thinking first is never a good idea
        - b. You may not believe this, but what you have to say may not be the most important thing someone needs to hear
      2. I've heard it said that for many people the sequence for what they speak is ready, fire, aim
  - e. But think of the power of Jesus' words in one situation
    - i. Jesus was dead and buried, it is three days later and the disciples are meeting together in a locked room because they are afraid
    - ii. Jesus is suddenly standing there in their midst
      1. Jesus had a choice of words at this point, did He not?
      2. He could have said, "You bunch of sniveling cowards! Not only are you not out there doing what I asked you to do, but you are hiding like scared children. Everyone of you deserted me! You are not my friends!"
      3. But He did not say anything like that, did He?
        - a. **John 20:19** tells us that he, very simply, said, *Peace be with you.*
        - b. He diffused the emotional powder keg by speaking loving and kind words
      4. Jesus knew full well the power of His words
        - a. Your words also have that same power to heal, or blow a situation up
  - f. Your words can encourage or discourage, bring hope or despair, heal or tear apart
    - i. Your words matter always
    - ii. Whether that is a conversation, an email, or a text
    - iii. Whether it's on Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat
  - g. Your words have power and can be used for either the good or the very bad of helping to shape another person's thoughts or emotions

2. Speak less, not more

- a. **Proverbs 29:11** says, *A fool gives vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.*
  - i. Let's paraphrase that verse without changing its meaning – Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut
  - ii. Abraham Lincoln was credited with saying, *Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.*
  - iii. Lincoln likely took the inspiration for that saying from **Proverbs 17:28** – *Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.*
- b. Perhaps that is why the verse in **James 1:19** is so important
  - i. The author writes, *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*
  - ii. Also, remember that God created every single person with two ears and one mouth
    1. How many of us listen twice as much as we talk?
    2. Learn to limit your words and when you do speak do it slowly

3. Speak gently, not harshly

- a. I do talk a lot
  - i. It is a part of my job and my calling
  - ii. But I don't talk this much everywhere I go
    1. As a matter of fact, I am much quieter at home
    2. I also enjoy being in situations when I am not required to talk or say much
  - iii. Why is this?
    1. Because I do guard carefully what I say when I am around other people
    2. Not only because I am a pastor but because that is how we are told to speak to others – guardedly
    3. **I Tim 6:20** - *...guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,*
- b. But we can expand this to not only what you say, but how you say it
  - i. Are you aware of the tone of your voice when you speak?
  - ii. Is it harsh, dismissive, condescending, sharp, or cutting?
    1. The tone of your voice carries just as much weight as the words you are saying
    2. And there are a lot of people, like me, who are very aware of tone and context
    3. But do you even think about it and the impact it is having on someone else
  - iii. **Proverbs 18:23** - *The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly.*
    1. Words spoken gently carry just as much weight and authority as words spoken in anger
    2. My boys telling me as adults how my “quiet voice” scared them

4. Think before you speak
  - a. **Proverbs 15:8** – *The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.*
    - i. Ponders – meditates, devises, considers
    - ii. Pours – gush, belch out
  - b. If you are considering your words before you speak, ask yourself this question – What impact will my words have?
    - i. Value? Resolution? Healing? Understanding? Edification?
    - ii. OR – vindication, injury, pain, confusion, emotional release
  
5. Speak the truth in love
  - a. **Proverbs 8:6-8** - *Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips hate an abomination. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.*
  - b. Abomination is not a word most people use in daily life
    - i. The word means something that is detestable
    - ii. Think of it this way – in South Carolina they have what they call Palmetto bugs
      1. They are a large, roach-like but that have long wings
      2. They are nasty looking
    - iii. Now imagine that you are at a fine restaurant and the waiter is bringing your main course
      1. He sets a large, bone-china plate before you covered with a silver-plated foot dome
      2. He removes the dome with great fanfare to reveal a plate full of Palmetto bugs crawling all over the plate and each other.
      3. He then looks down at you and asks, “What type of dipping sauce would you like with these?”
    - iv. That’s an abomination!
    - v. That is how much God hates a lying and deceitful tongue
  - c. And those are the qualities of a person who often regrets what they say

I honestly think that if we just pause, think, and consider what we are about to say BEFORE we say it, we would regret much less of what we say.

Paul tells the people at the church in Ephesus to speak the truth in love (**Eph 4:15**)

- We are all sinners saved by grace
- Our words are powerful
- Not everything you have to say is of great importance
- When you do speak, do it in love