

I am constantly studying and reading books. I love to learn and am always trying to stretch myself. But the problem is no matter how much knowledge I gain about physics, philosophy, or the early patristic era of the church, I can still be an idiot. All my supposed intelligence doesn't always help me make better decisions. I don't need another new book to read. I need wisdom. And like me, we probably all need to gain more wisdom.

We are beginning a new study this morning on the Proverbs for the next few weeks. We are going to see how God's Word can help us become wiser people.

And this series will be slightly different. Usually, we read lots of God's Word together for our sermons. We generally look at an entire chapter. Sometimes even 2 or more. Our regular diet is larger sections. But for this series we are going to change our pace and slow down. Throughout this series we are only going to tackle one verse at a time. This will help us slowly chew on and meditate on these verses. To let them sink deep down into our hearts.

The average person speaks thousands of words every day. And we are not always wise on how we use each word. So, today in Proverbs 12:18 we are going to examine how we can have wise speech. Specifically, we are going to see the power of our tongues for danger, for good, and we will end by looking at how Jesus uses His tongue.

Turn with me to Proverbs 12:18

### **I. Don't harm others with reckless speech.**

#### **"There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts"**

Right away we notice that he is comparing our speech to a sword. He says that speaking recklessly, or foolishly is like swinging a sword about. It would be like if I pulled out a big sword.

And I stood in the aisle.

Closed my eyes.

And just started swinging it around to see what would happen.

That kind of behavior would be incredibly foolish.

Someone would certainly get hurt.

Someone could even be killed.

I did something like this once.  
Growing up, my friend Levi and I found some swords in a garage.  
So we did what any foolish teenager boy would do.  
We decided to pull them out and have a sword fight.  
It was fine at first.  
We were having fun but we started to get more into it.  
And before you know it, we got reckless and were trying to win.  
One of us cut the other and the sight of blood made us stop.  
It wasn't a serious wound at all.  
Small enough we could hide it from our parents.  
But the moment made us realize how insanely foolish we were.  
And how dangerous what we did was.

What all of us need to see.  
Is that our reckless words are just as dangerous as teenagers fooling  
around with swords.

What does reckless speech look like for us?  
It looks like when we speak without thinking.  
It looks like when we say whatever comes to our minds.  
When we decide we want to "tell it like it is."  
Those are reckless words.  
They are rash.  
And they are dangerous.  
It can be incredibly hurtful.

This does not mean that every time we are careless with our words we hurt  
others.  
It doesn't mean that every time we speak it does great harm.  
But when we are thoughtless.  
When we speak without thought.  
These are the moments that are the most dangerous.  
That is when we are most likely to hurt other people.  
Because we do not realize how dangerous it is.

How many of you carry wounds from words?  
How many specific words were said by someone.  
Maybe they were even words they spoke without thinking.  
But they stung and they hurt.  
And years later you can still remember those words clearly.  
And years later they still sting.

I remember playing with kids in the neighborhood when I was around 8.  
I was new to the neighborhood and all the other kids had been friends for  
a long time.  
They had nicknames for each other and I remember I wanted one too.  
I asked them to give me one, and they told me "Why would we give you  
one?"  
That was close to 20 years ago.  
And the words of a child still hurt.  
Because words can hurt like a sword.

Now, we don't use swords a lot in our everyday life.  
So maybe the example on the proverbs is not as helpful.  
Let me update a little bit in modern language that might help you.  
Another way to think about this is that every time you speak recklessly.  
Every time we speak foolishly.  
Every time that we are speaking without thinking, it is like taking a loaded  
gun and shooting it off without looking where you're aiming.

Our tongues are like guns.  
They have incredible destructive power.  
And a lot of us to shoot them off without realizing the damage that we do.  
We shoot them off without realizing and recognize the consequences that  
can come.

It would be wise for us to think about and begin to treat our words as if  
they really were loaded weapons.

One of the things that you do when you're teaching someone how to handle firearms.

You want them to treat them correctly and with respect and the way that is wise to teach them to always act like it is loaded.

You never assume that the weapon is empty.

You never pointed at another person unless you're intending to shoot them.

Don't even put your finger on the trigger unless you are ready to pull it.

Because you always need to be aware and handle the immense responsibility of that weapon rightly.

We need to treat our tongues with the same respect.

Always act as if our tongues are loaded with the power to destroy someone we're speaking with.

Need to be sure that we are not pointing at it and trying to hurt someone just so we can win an argument.

We need to be wise and treat our tongues like they're loaded gun.

If we are reckless and rash with how we speak, then we could kill someone.

Some of you then analogy might really work with it and click him and help you see it.

Some of you in this room might not like guns be very comfortable around them.

So you don't even want to think about your tongue as a loaded gun because that scares you.

And I'll be honest too I don't particularly like guns.

I've been around them plenty.

I've shot them a lot.

I'm a decent shot even actually.

But I don't have any guns and I don't really want any.

My own convictions won't let me take the step and owning them.

Because seeing how powerful they are, I I don't want that responsibility in my own hands for any reason.

You can disagree with me there that's really not what this is about.

I don't wanna get sidetracked and this is not a sermon about whether we should or shouldn't have owned guns.

The Bible is open to both interpretations.

The point is that all of us have something even more powerful than guns.

Our tongues.

The way that we talk.

And some of us in the room might be so uncomfortable with guns that we would never want to touch one. We would never want to shoot one we would never want to have one in our hands.

And yet we will speak in a way that is incredibly careless.

And yet we will talk in a way that is even more destructive.

More of us have attitude about our tongues.

Maybe more of us should think wow the way that we talk is such an incredible responsibility. I don't even know if I wanna have a tongue.

It should make us think this is so strong and this is such a potential to go wrong. I think I might wanna talk a lot less today.

You know what I think I'm gonna try and as little as possible because I really don't want to accidentally shoot and harm someone with what I say.

I think a good attitude.

We should have attitude.

We should take some time it doesn't have to be a whole day, but we should take moments or hours or times or we go for a little bit. I'm gonna say as little as possible and be careful that every word that comes out of my mouth is intentional.

I know about you, but this is an incredibly convicting for me.

At least personally as a pastor, I talk a lot.

Maybe some of you wish I would talk a little less.

Maybe you wish I would talk more I don't know.

Where reality is that my words have just as much potential as yours to be harmful.

But I haven't even greater responsibility as a pastor.

Because of the authority and the position that I have been given and hold. God will hold me responsible and an even greater level for the words that I use when I am standing in this assembly.

Because if I speak rationally, it can harm people.

It really can.

And unfortunately, I see this a lot in pulpits all across our country.

I see a guys who get up and some of them just like want to do a standup routine.

So they're just trying to be funny or provocative or edgy and they don't mind if they're harming people because I just need to get tough and stop being sensitive.

I can see others who don't really plan out what they're doing and they're just gonna go up and go with the flow and just fall the spirit and just say whatever they want whatever comes to mind.

That's not dangerous to do in general, but especially if someone is handling the word of God.

All of us are gonna be held responsible one day for the harm that we do with our tongues and with our words.

And those of us in positions of spiritual authority, elders leaders, volunteers back with our children.

You will be held to standard the words that you speak because of that.

This is why we not many of us want to become teachers.

We need to be careful.

Whether you were a leader, whether you aren't.

Your words have power.

Now I don't wanna overlay the power that our words have.

Because there are some in the prosperity gospel movement.

There are some in the word of faith movement who will take passages like this and other places and go to the extreme.

They will say that our words have incredible power to death and bring life. So you never need to say anything negative because you were going into existence.

They will say things like oh don't even say that you feel like you're getting sick because that's gonna bring the sickness true.

Don't say anything negative or harmful about yourself because it's making it true or it's giving the enemy more power over you.

That is not at all what I mean, and that isn't true.

That's not what the Bible teaches us.

With this passage is telling us that we can hurt other people.

That our words have incredible power to harm others.

It's not that they can bring things into existence like God can.

But we can wound.

We need to be careful how we talk.

Let's think of some examples of how we do this.

How we can harm others in how we speak.

One of the ways I most often see this, is how we talk about our enemies.

How we talk about people who are different than us.

How we talk about people who have a different political perspective.

How we talk about people who have a different theological conviction.

How we talk about people who have a different sexual orientation.

Especially how we talk about people who don't follow Jesus.

Let me ask you, how do you talk about those people?

Do you speak rashly about them?

Do you think about the impact your words might have?

I see this so often.

Everyone you see.

Every single human being is made in the image of God.

And God loves them.  
And God cares about how you treat them.  
God cares about how you speak about them.  
Do not dehumanize other people.

Does that mean we cannot disagree?  
Does that mean we cannot tell other people they are wrong?  
Absolutely not.  
But it does mean, we need to have care in how we talk.

Especially because you do not always realize who is around you.  
You might think because you are in church here, you can say whatever you want about transgender people.  
Or you can speak harshly about people in California or in big cities.  
But you have no idea who is around you.  
You do not know what people are struggling with.  
And your words can be hurtful.

I can see this especially in the days of the internet.  
The things people say online is crazy.  
If you don't believe me, just go online for a few minutes and you will see it.  
But what amazes me the most is how often our language is harmful.  
How often it is dehumanizing.  
Because the internet is real, but it isn't.

You type words on a keyboard, or on your phone and they just disappear.  
And people speak towards each other online in a way they might never in person.  
But there is always another human being on the other side of the screen.  
And they are made in the image of God.  
And our words we speak there can be harmful too.



Now that is enough about how harmful our words can be. There is a flip side to this as well. We also need to recognize how helpful and healing our words can be.

## **II. Heal others with wise speech.**

Our tongues do not just have the power to harm and destroy. They also have incredible power to help and heal others. And if they can heal others, then that should be primarily how we use them.

### **"But the tongue of the wise brings healing."**

One thing we need to note is whose tongue this is. It does not just say "wise words bring healing."

It is **"the tongue of the wise."**

We do not just need to say wise things.

It is not enough to be more careful with our words.

We need to become people of wisdom.

We need to become the kind of people who can bring healing.

There is an inward change that needs to take place

    Before an outward change can come with our speech.

Jesus knew this, which is why He said that out of the heart the mouth speaks.

Sometimes we say things and then we regret it.

So we say, "I don't know why I said that. I didn't mean it."

The problem is we always mean it.

Otherwise we wouldn't say it.

Our hearts say lots of things we wish they wouldn't.

We say what is truly on our hearts.

It is not enough to just try to say nicer things.

Or to not say so much hurtful stuff.

We need more.

We need to become wise.

We need Jesus to continue to transform our hearts.  
We need Jesus to continue the work He began in us.  
We need to be sanctified and slowly become more and more like Christ.  
That way we can be people who say wise things.

And the goal of that is not just to be better.  
It is not just to become wise ourselves.  
The purpose in this Proverb, is so that we can heal others.  
So that we can use the power of our words to bring healing.

One practical way to do this is through encouragement.  
Not just generic encouragement.  
But real and genuine encouragement.  
Almost everyone likes to be encouraged.  
We enjoy when other people build us up and tell us what we are doing well.  
It can fill our sails and give us strength for the rest of the day.

As Christians, we should be doing that for each other.  
One way for encouragement to be healing is for it to be specific.  
To not just say, "I appreciate you."  
But instead to say, "I appreciate how you always reach out to check in on me."  
Or instead of just saying, "you encourage me,"  
you say, "Your attitude even when i know you are dealing with hard things really encourages me when I am struggling."  
The more specific you can be, the more encouraging it is.

This is especially an area where us men in the room need to be better.  
Culturally, men are not generally known for this.  
The language of intimacy among men is insult.  
We mock and laugh at each other as a way to show love.  
Sometimes that is fine.  
But is that how Christian men should be?

Is that what we should be known for?  
What if we were known for healing words instead?  
What if we chose to speak words of life over others.

I try to be intentional about this with my boys.  
Almost every day I say some of the same things to them.  
Most of them are things like "please stop hitting your brother."  
"Don't put that in your mouth."

But there are other things I repeat.  
Things I say every day because I want them to be healing.  
I want them to be an anchor.  
I want them to be words they hold onto long after I have died.  
Every day, I tell them I love them, I am proud of them, and that I like everything about them, and I am so glad they are my sons.  
I say it over and over.  
And my prayer is those words will help heal the wounds that will come.  
That they will heal when they doubt themselves.  
When others tear them down.  
When they don't know what it means to be a man in this world.

What if we tried to be that intentional, not just with our children and loved ones.  
But what if we spoke that way to everyone?  
What would it look like for you if you intentionally sought to heal with what you said?

Now we can do that and we should.  
But the true and lasting kind of healing people need is Christ.  
Christians should not just be people who are encouraging.  
It is not enough to be those who tell other people nice things.  
Who make others happy because we are around.  
Our goal should be to see people be healed spiritually.  
To see the dead be brought back to life.

How can we do that?

We do that when we proclaim the gospel.

When we proclaim and offer the healing Jesus brings.

When we tell people about the love God has for them.

How He died in their place.

How Jesus gave everything that they would be adopted into His family.

When we do that, we are bringing healing.

We can also do this when our words embody Christ.

Our words have power to truly heal when they are like Christ.

When we speak the words Christ says.

When we talk about people in a way that honors Christ.

When we speak to other people with the heart of Christ.

When we talk to each other with the love Christ has for us.

When we decide to do that.

That is when our words can be healing.

We don't always have use specific intentional words of encouragement.

But if we speak like Jesus.

If we talk to each other like those who have been born again and transformed by Jesus, then we can heal.

Ultimately, this kind of healing people need cannot come through our own words alone.

Ultimately, this kind of healing can only come through Christ.

### **III. Gospel: Jesus heals us with a word.**

One of the beauties of Proverbs is how accessible and easy to understand much of it is.

It is hard to put into practice, but most of them are straight forward.

They are often a place I've encouraged non-Christians to read.

Because they can read and see the wisdom in it.

But the challenge is what makes these Proverbs Christian?  
What separates the wisdom here from buddhist wisdom?  
Or Islamic wisdom?  
Or from a generic advice book?

And that is a question we need to ask as we study the proverbs.  
We have to be careful we are not treating these verses as anything less than the Word of God.  
And we need to be sure we are interpreting them in a distinctly Christian way.  
In a way that can only be true if Jesus really was God and He really did die on the cross for our sins.

There are a number of ways we can do that.  
One way is when you read the Proverbs, ask yourself how Jesus fulfilled this verse.  
Or ask how Jesus lived out this verse.  
Because Jesus lived a perfect life in every moment.  
That means He always obeyed every single verse of the Bible in every moment.  
So, we should ask, "How did Jesus use His tongue?"  
How did He avoid speaking rashly?  
How did He speak in a way that heals.

We see repeatedly how Jesus avoids speaking rashly.  
He never says anything on accident.  
He never said anything He did not mean.  
Every single word out of Jesus, his mouth is intentional and holy.

He says almost nothing on the way to the cross.  
Even in the trial, even while being tortured, even while dying.  
He is careful and exact in everything He says.

Even in how He speaks to the Pharisees.

He rebukes, sometimes He even uses strong language.  
But He is never reckless.  
There are two instances Jesus says something a little different.  
Once he calls them a brood of vipers,  
Another time he calls them whitewashed tombs.  
But that's not Jesus cursing at them.  
Nor is it him getting angry or trying to hurt their feelings.

Jesus is choosing and using those words intentionally to point out their sin  
and try to bring them into repentance.  
Most of the time Jesus asked them questions.  
Jesus says something or ask them a question that gets to the heart of the  
matter.  
He is always clear in what is wrong.  
And there is always the invitation to repent.

Look at how Jesus spoke to His disciples even when they failed.  
He does not berate them or insult them.  
His words are always seasoned with grace.  
They are invitations to keep following.  
Jesus words are never rash, and they're never meant to hurt.  
Sometimes they sting in the pierce, but they do so to Pierce to bring healing.

The words of God are far more powerful than we can even begin to  
imagine.  
Think about the very beginning of Genesis.  
God speaks all of creation into existence.  
And He does so with a word.  
He says, "let there be light."  
And light is created out of nothing.  
He speaks order into the chaos.  
His words do not just metaphorical power like ours to harm or to heal.  
His words create life.

And His words can destroy.  
But so often, how does Jesus use His words?  
How does Jesus speak?  
He speaks to bring healing and life.

Many times His words bring literal healing.  
Jesus told the woman who had bled for 12 years, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."  
To a man filled with a legion of demons, Jesus just says, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit."  
Jesus told a dead girl his parents thought Jesus was too late to heal, he says "Little girl, arise."  
To a leper he says, "be clean."  
To a disabled woman he said, "Woman, you are freed from your disability."  
He told the wind and the waves of a storm He said, "be still."  
To the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said "neither do I condemn you, go and from now on sin no more."

And the most healing words Jesus spoke were some of His last.  
On the cross, He spoke **"It is finished."**  
When He spoke those words, our sin was dealt with.  
When He spoke those words, our debts were all paid.  
When He spoke those words, the devil lost control of our lives.  
Because of the words of Christ, we can be born again and have new life.  
Our lives and our tongues can be healed.  
And this healing can only come through Christ.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Don't harm others with reckless speech, heal others with wise speech. And remember Jesus heals us with a word.
2. Our tongues are like loaded guns. We have to be aware of the danger they bring. And we also need to be aware of the healing Christ brings. When we speak like Jesus, we can others healed.