




TALKING WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Note: For each of the following questions, refer to the **Sermon Summary** inside.

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Proverbs 18:21 teaches that words are powerful and can bring either “death” or “life”. As a group, discuss your reactions to the following incident Pastor Doug recounted:
An ESPN announcer once catalogued the accolades and accomplishments of Green Bay Packer great Bret Favre. Tears welled-up in Favre's eyes as he replied: *"I would give all of that up to hear my dad say one time while he was living, 'I'm proud of you.' Not once did my father ever say to me, 'Son, I love you!' "*
- 2 Pastor Doug identified three main instructions for our speech: pause our words, restrain our words, and give life with our words. How could obedience to each of those three instructions have “given life” (Proverbs 18:21) to this man who otherwise seems to “have it all”?
- 3 What positive uses of words did Pastor Doug emphasize?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 4 Why do the Scriptures identify gossip as a serious sin?
- 5 What is theologically true about a person who complains?
- 6 According to Ephesians 4:29, what should be the goal of our speech?
- 7 What does Pastor Doug identify as the ultimate example of “giving life” through our words?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 8 Review the ten harmful speech habits Pastor Doug identified. With which one do you most struggle?
- 9 Brainstorm how you could graciously decline to gossip. Then, pair-up and practice those strategies.
- 10 Who in your life could be blessed by life-giving words from you?
- 11 What specific action can you take this week to “give life” with your words?

- ① Just guide this discussion. Get everyone talking. Follow up with questions such as “Tell me more.”
- ② Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.
- ③ Using words to encourage others, to express love and gratitude, to affirm, and to share the gospel.
- ④ Gossip damages people, spreads harmful information, and involves both the speaker and the listener in wrongdoing. God **hates** gossip—and **cuts out** the perverse tongue! (Proverbs 6:16-19 & 10:31)
- ⑤ That person lacks trust in God’s sovereignty and goodness.
- ⑥ Our speech should edify others, meet the needs of the moment, and give grace to those who hear.
- ⑦ The message of salvation through Christ, which can lead to **eternal** life.
- ⑧ Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.
- ⑨ Consider these steps: (1) redirect the conversation, (2) say that you wish to be careful to not engage in gossip, (3) encourage the person to speak directly to the individual involved.
- ⑩ Let group members (not you) answer this question.
- ⑪ Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.



Make plans as a group to use this summer’s conference as an outreach to neighbors and co-workers.

Jim Dieffenderfer will speak the first three Sundays:

- Sunday morning, July 5 Entering into the Debate
- Sunday morning, July 12 Evaluating Evolutionary Icons
- Sunday morning, July 19 Evolution’s Fatal Flaw

Then, Dr. Terry Mortenson of Answers in Genesis will speak the final Sunday morning, followed by evening sessions Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:

- Sunday morning, July 26 Evolution v. Creation: Why Does it Matter?
- Sunday evening, July 26 Ape-men, Adam and the Gospel
- Monday evening, July 27 Millions of Years: Unscientific Origin, Catastrophic Consequences
- Tuesday evening, July 28 Noah’s Flood: Washing Away Millions of Years

Sermon Summary Proverbs 18:21

Words are powerful. Words can even influence the course of your life. Sometimes it's not what you say, it's what you don't say - the spoken and the unspoken. Given that words are powerful, how do we live as wise people with our words? The book of Proverbs guides us.

We are to pause our words. We need to be careful to pause before we speak, to give God a chance to intervene (Proverbs 29:20). Somewhere between the action and the reaction, there is a span of time. And the longer that time span, the more opportunity God has to influence how we choose to respond (James 1:19). Whenever the Bible gives us a command, God gives us the power to keep that command. In other words, we are responsible for what we decide to do in that span of time between the action and the reaction. We have the ability to control our words. Anytime there's a conflict or a need to address a situation where what we say and how we say it has great significance, we need to pause and allow the Holy Spirit to edit what we say.

We are to restrain our words. There is an important corollary to the Biblical advice to pause our word; we are to restrain our words. It is the pause that leads to the restraint (Proverbs 10:19). Sometimes the more we speak, the greater the likelihood that we will say something we shouldn't say.

1. Dehumanizing Speech (James 3:8-10). There are certain things that should never pass the lips of a follower of Jesus. James says that it is incongruent to bless God one moment and then turn around and curse someone who has been made in the likeness of God.

2. Harsh Words (Proverbs 11:9). God has given us a wonderful gift called communication. God gave us that gift so that we could resolve conflict. He gave us that gift so we could affirm one another. But if we use harsh words to manipulate someone to do what we want them to do, or to condemn them for not seeing things our way, it's wrong.

3. Exaggeration (Proverbs 4:24). We should not use words like "always" and "never" to describe someone else's behavior, because that's rarely true. Universal statements are rarely accurate.

4. Lies (Proverbs 14:25). Every time you lie, you undermine your credibility. Lying is a character issue. Dishonesty is not a positive trait. You cannot trust a dishonest person. They lack integrity. We need to be people of the truth.

5. Gossip or Slander (Proverbs 20:19). The Bible says a lot about gossip. This verse says that those of us who listen to gossip are as much to blame as those who slander other people, whether it be true or not.

6. Misplaced complaints (Matthew 18:15). If someone comes to you and begins to tell you about a conflict they're having with someone else, just say, "Have you applied Matthew 18:15?" Have you talked to the person you're having a problem with?

7. Bragging (Proverbs 27:2). These people have to tell you who they know and what their connections are. Bragging comes across as prideful and insecure. It's not an attractive personality trait.

8. Ingratitude (1 Thessalonians 5:18). A lot of us are guilty of complaining. A complaining Christian is an oxymoron. If you really believe what the Bible teaches, nothing is ever going to touch your life that the Sovereign God of the Universe has not allowed. The Bible teaches that God is so powerful that He causes even those bad things, those tragic things, to work together for our overall good (Romans 8:28). To be constantly complaining is a failure to trust Him (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

9. Criticism (Ephesians 4:29). This passage tells us that when we have a conflict with someone, our words must be edifying—they must be designed to produce a good result. Our words should be wholesome and winsome and positively instructive. The intent of our words should be to improve the situation or build up the person. Another question we need to ask ourselves when in conflict with someone - "Is the timing right?" So, when it comes to the temptation to criticize, we need to "THINK" before we speak.

10. Unnecessary words (Proverbs 17:28). When you don't know what to say, just keep quiet. Your presence alone can be a great comfort. Refraining from unnecessary words is a sign of wisdom.

Look over these ten areas of speech and take note of the ones with which you most struggle. Make a commitment right now that if the Holy Spirit convicts you, you will take a step back and repent of it and edit what you are about to say.

We are to give life with our words. It's not just about what we don't say. It's not just about pausing and restraining. We can do a lot of good by what we do say. We can point people to the source of eternal life (Romans 10:13-15). Speak words of life to others. Be God's instruments to bless people, to encourage them, to point them to a God who loves them more than they could ever imagine.

Guidelines for Biblical Communication

Study the following Scriptures and follow these guidelines:

1. **Be a ready listener** and do not answer until the other person has finished talking (Proverbs 18:13 & James 1:19).
2. **Be slow to speak.** Think first. Don't be hasty in your words. Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you say (Proverbs 15:23 & 28; 29:20; James 1:9).
3. **Don't go to bed angry!** Each day, clear the offenses of that day. Speak the truth, but do it in love. Do not exaggerate. (Ephesians 4:15 & 25; Colossians 3:8; Matthew 6:34).
4. **Do not use silence to frustrate the other person.** Explain why you are hesitant to talk at this time (Proverbs 10:19; 15:28; 16:21 & 23; 18:2; 20:15; Colossians 4:6).
5. **Do not become involved in quarrels.** It is possible to disagree without quarreling (Proverbs 17:14; 20:3; Romans 13:13; Ephesians 4:31).
6. **Do not respond in uncontrolled anger.** Use a soft and kind response and tone of voice (Proverbs 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Ephesians 4:26 & 31).
7. **When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness** and ask how you can change (Proverbs 12:15; 16:2; 20:6; 21:2; Matthew 5:23-25; Luke 17:3; James 5:16).
8. **When someone confesses wrongdoing, forgive him.** Do not bring it back up to that person, to others, or even to yourself! (Proverbs 17:9; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 4:8).
9. **Do not complain or demand.** (Proverbs 10:19; 16:21 & 23; 17:9; 18:6-7; 21:19; 27:15).
10. **Do not blame.** Instead, restore...encourage...edify. (Romans 14:3; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:11).
11. **When others blame you, do not respond in-kind** (Romans 12:17 & 21; 1 Peter 2:23 & 3:9).
12. **Seek to understand and be concerned about the other person's opinion.** Make allowances for differences (Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3-4 & 3:15-16).