

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 10

*Life & Death
In the Power of the Tongue*

Life and Death in the Tongue

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To learn that life and death are both in the power of the tongue (our words). We will also see that there are times when it is wise to speak, and other times when it is wise not to speak.

Key Verses

Proverbs 18:21

Proverbs 12:18, 25

Proverbs 15:2, 4

Proverbs 10:19

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 29:11

John 8:3-11

James 3:3-12

Memory Verse - Proverbs 12:18

"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Proverbs 10:1.

Ask the kids what kinds of things in the world cause death? (Sickness, disease, accidents, wars, violence, guns, etc.)

Ask the kids what kinds of things in the world bring/preserve life? (Medicine, doctors, peace, governments, police officers, Jesus, etc.)

Did you know that there is a tool that can bring death and life? All of us have this tool. Can you think of what it is? (The tongue)

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

The Bible has a lot to say about the power of the tongue/words. The tongue is a small thing, but James 3 tells us that just like a small rudder on a large ship, or a tiny bit in a mighty horse's mouth, or a small fire that can set a whole forest ablaze, the tongue is very powerful! We will look at that more in depth when we study the book of James later this year. For now, we will stick to looking at Proverbs, which goes so far as to say that "life and death are in the power of the tongue" (18:21). This powerful tool is given to each of us by God's design. It is evidence that we are made in His image. Words can be used to do good, or words can be used to do evil, and only God can help us use speech to do good.

God makes it clear to us in the Bible that the things we say—every single word—matter. What we say matters to us (to preserve life or come to ruin, Proverbs 13:3). What we say matters to others (to harm or to help, Proverbs 12:18). And what we say matters to God, in whose image we are made. He will hold us accountable for every word we say. Wisdom speaks words of life and health, and even knows when not to speak. Foolishness speaks words that are destructive and harmful, and speaks whatever comes to mind.

Jesus showed us the power of words on many occasions, but one example of such a time was when a sinful woman was brought to him to be killed for breaking the law. Jesus wrote words in the dirt that sent her accusers running, and when she was left alone, He spoke to her words of grace, hope, and life (John 8:3-11). As followers of Jesus we should do the same. **(Note for teachers: this is not a time to discuss adultery.**

Children can be directed to their parents if questions arise. We are just describing this woman as sinful and having broken the law).

LOOK

"Sticks and stone may break my bones but words will never hurt me." Do you think this is true? Have you ever been hurt by someone's words? The Bible makes it clear that this silly old saying isn't true at all! Words can be harmful, like getting stabbed by a sword (Proverbs 12:18). Words can even bring death! With a word, someone can make an accusation that could put someone in jail. With a word, a judge can declare someone guilty. With a word, a friendship can be broken. But the opposite is also true. Words can also make others feel good, lift them out of anxiety, and even bring life! It is wise to speak words that are healthy and life-giving. It is foolish to speak words that are harmful and deadly.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK (Continued)

In addition to speaking words that are life-giving, wisdom also knows when to speak, and when *not* to speak. Just because something is true does not mean we should say it. Can you think of times when you might be able to say something about someone that is true, but is also hurtful?

Consider the following:

- **Proverbs 12:18**—There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.
- **Proverbs 12:25**—Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.
- **Proverbs 18:21**—Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Jesus once met a sinful woman who dishonored God with her life (John 8:3-11). She was actually brought to Jesus by religious leaders who wanted to put her to death for breaking the law! The religious leaders were also trying to find something to accuse Jesus of and thought that in bringing this woman they would finally trap Jesus in a dilemma. Jesus responded in a way they did not expect. He stooped down and started writing words in the dirt. He stood up briefly and said to the religious leaders, "Whoever is without sin cast the first stone." Jesus then went back to writing on the ground, and as He did this, one by one, the people accusing the sinful woman walked away.

When Jesus got up from writing, only the woman was left. She told Jesus that her accusers were all gone. Jesus then spoke these powerful words to her: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." With those words, Jesus saved this woman's life! He saved her with the words written in the ground to her accusers, and He lifted the burden of condemnation that she had because of her sin. The reality was that she was guilty, but Jesus gave her grace and told her to go and sin no more.

In addition to speaking words that are life-giving, wisdom also knows when to speak and when not to speak. Have you ever said something that you regretted later on? Just because something is true doesn't mean we should say it. Can you think of times when you might be able to say something about someone that is true but is also harmful? (You don't like what your mom made for dinner, someone on your team isn't as talented as you are, your parents tell you to do something that you don't want to do, etc.) This requires self-control (a fruit of the Holy Spirit) and discernment (using knowledge rightly). We need God's help! It can be hard not to talk back to someone, or not to gossip, or not to mock someone for doing something poorly. Proverbs says that even a fool is considered wise if he keeps silent (17:28). The way of the fool is to say whatever comes to mind without considering what God would want us say.

LOOK (Continued)

Consider the verses below:

- **Proverbs 10:19**—In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.
- **Proverbs 13:3**—Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
- **Proverbs 15:2**—The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.
- **Proverbs 29:11**—A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back.

All of us are guilty of speaking foolishly at times, but there was one Man who only ever spoke words that pleased God. His disciples followed Him because He had the words of eternal life (John 6:68), and even His enemies said, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46). His heart was perfect, undefiled by sin. He came to take our sin upon Himself, so our hearts could be made perfect like His heart. Jesus offers the same words of life to us that He offered to the sinful woman. His Word to us is that in Him there is no more condemnation (Romans 8:1).

In Jesus, God has given us the help we need to use the power of our tongue for good. He gave us His Word and His Holy Spirit. One or the other is not enough. We need both! When we repent of our sins and acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior, God gives us a new heart! Now our words can please God, keep us safe, and help others as healthy, helpful, and life-giving. This is the way of wisdom.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Proverbs 12:18.

Pray: Ask God to help you use your tongue for His glory, to give life and health to those around you. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit to help give you self-control to keep from saying things that could be harmful.

Parent Question: How can words bring life? How can they bring death? Who helps us control the power of the tongue to use it for good?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on John 8:3-11 by David Guzik

2. ([Jhn 8:3-5](#)) The woman is brought to Jesus, caught in the act of adultery.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”

a. **Brought to Him a woman caught in adultery:** They did this as Jesus publically taught in the temple courts. They wanted to make this as public as possible, to embarrass both the woman and Jesus.

i. “All the indications are that her accusers had some special vindictiveness against her. This is shown also in the fact that they brought the woman along publicly...There was no need for this. She might have been kept in custody while the case was referred to Jesus.” (Morris)

ii. The verb **caught** is in the perfect tense. “The perfect indicates a meaning like ‘taken with her shame upon her’. It points to her continuing character as an adulteress.” (Morris)

b. **This woman was caught in adultery, in the very act:** The religious leaders brought this woman to Jesus in shame-filled, humiliating circumstances. She was held against her will, a prisoner under the custody of the religious police who caught her involved with a man not her husband, **in the very act** of adultery.

i. To mention the obvious, there was also a man involved in this **very act of adultery** – yet the guilty man was *not* brought before Jesus for judgment. It also meant that there were pre-arranged spies sent to witness this affair, and they carefully noted the sordid details.

ii. Morris points out that legally speaking, the standard of evidence was very high for this crime. There had to be two witnesses and they had to agree perfectly. They had to see the sexual act take place; it wasn’t enough to see the pair leaving the same room together or even lying on the same bed together. “The actual physical movements of the couple must have been capable of no other explanation.... conditions were so stringent that they could have been met only on rare occasions.” (Morris)

iii. “Under these conditions the obtaining of evidence in adultery would be almost impossible were the situation not a setup.” (Boice)

c. **Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned:** It is true that adultery was a capital offense under Jewish law, but the rules for evidence in capital cases were extremely strict. The actual act had to be observed by multiple witnesses who agreed exactly in their testimony. As a practical matter, virtually no one was executed for adultery, since this was a relatively private sin.

i. “It appears that by the first century ad the full rigour of the law was no longer applied as a general rule, in urban communities at any rate.” (Bruce)

ii. “From the reference to the law in [verse 5](#) it might seem that she was liable to this particular punishment because she had sinned during the period of betrothal, fornication during that time being regarded as adultery.” (Tasker)

d. **But what do You say?** They set a trap for Jesus. If Jesus said, “Let her go,” then He would seem to break the Law of Moses. If He said, “Execute her for the crime of adultery,” then Jesus would seem harsh and perhaps cruel. Also, He would break Roman law, because the Romans had taken the right of official execution for religious offenses away from the Jews.

i. This was a similar dilemma as posed by the question to Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar ([Matthew 22:15-22](#)).

3. ([Jhn 8:6](#)) Jesus ignores the accusers, as if He never heard them.

This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

a. **This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him:** The religious leaders – wretched men as they were – used this woman as a weapon against Jesus. They presented her as a sinner before Jesus, but ignored their own sin in the matter.

i. They cared nothing for true righteousness, for it was evident that they carefully arranged both the adulterous act and her arrest. They claimed that **this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act** – yet they did not bring the guilty *man* before Jesus. It’s possible that the man was one of them, and they simply used the woman as a weapon or pawn in their conflict against Jesus.

ii. “Adultery is not the kind of offence that can be committed by one person in solitude; if she was caught red-handed, how was her guilty partner allowed to escape?” (Bruce)

iii. “They were not looking on this woman as a person at all; they were looking on her only as a thing, an instrument whereby they could formulate a charge against Jesus.” (Barclay)

b. **Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger:** This was a careful and deliberate response from Jesus. Instead of making an immediate verbal response He **stooped down**. Then He **wrote on the ground with His finger**, presumably in the dirt on the ground.

i. **Stooped down** indicates humility. Jesus didn’t react with anger or immediate outrage. He didn’t scream at the woman or those who brought the woman. Jesus paused and **stooped down**.

ii. **Stooped down** is a low posture, identifying with the humiliation of the woman. Jesus did what He could to identify with, care for, and ease the embarrassment of this woman. One may say this story illustrates the great problem: how can God show love and grace to the sinner without being unjust, without breaking His own law? He does it by first identifying with the sinner in their low condition.

iii. **Wrote on the ground** means that Jesus could write, and that He wrote in the presence of the woman and these men. *What Jesus wrote* has been an endless source of speculation for teachers, preachers, and commentators.

· Some think that Jesus simply doodled in the dirt. The verb translated **wrote** could also mean, “to draw.” (Morris)

· Some think Jesus simply stalled for time.

· Some think that Jesus wrote the passage in the law that condemned the adulterous woman.

· Some think Jesus wrote out a passage like [Exodus 23:1](#): *Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.*

· Some think that Jesus wrote the names of the accusers.

· Some think that Jesus the sins of the accusers.

· Some think that Jesus followed Roman judicial practice and wrote out His sentence before He said it.

iv. “The normal Greek word for *to write* is *graphein*; but here the word used is *katagraphēini*, which can mean *to write down a record against someone.*” (Barclay)

c. **As though He did not hear:** As Jesus stooped down and wrote, He acted as if He did not even hear the accusation against the woman. Perhaps Jesus ignored them because He despised their wicked work. Perhaps Jesus ignored them because He was embarrassed for the woman’s sake.

i. Paul made reference to *the meekness and gentleness of Christ* ([2 Corinthians 10:1](#)) – this is what we see on display here.

4. ([Jhn 8:7-8](#)) Jesus passes sentence upon the accusers.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

a. **So when they continued asking Him:** Jesus stooped down, wrote on the ground, and acted as if He did not hear the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. The men who brought the woman didn’t stop asking Jesus what should be done with her – **they continued asking Him.**

b. **He raised Himself up and said to them:** Jesus said this directly to the accusers of the woman, standing up to make eye contact with them.

c. **He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first:** In Jewish law, witnesses to the capital crime began the stoning. Jesus really said, “We may execute her, but we must do it correctly. One of the witnesses must begin her execution. So who among you is the one who witnessed this crime, and only brought to Me the woman, not the man? Who designed the humiliation of this poor woman?”

i. Instead of passing a sentence upon the woman, Jesus passed a sentence upon His accusers. He didn’t say, “Don’t execute her.” He simply demanded that justice be fairly and righteously applied.

ii. **Without sin among you:** It wasn’t that these men had sinned once or twice before, and so had no right to be concerned about the woman’s sin. It’s that they orchestrated and plotted her sin, her shame, using her as a weapon against Jesus. *In this direct incident* they had a greater sin and a greater guilt.

iii. In this Jesus exposed a common sin: a desire to punish the sins of others, while ignoring our own sin. King David was an example of this when Nathan the Prophet told him the story of a man who stole and killed the pet lamb of another man ([2 Samuel 12:1-10](#)).

iv. *If we must look at the sins of others, we must be aware that we have also sinned.* There is still a place for exposing and rebuking and directly dealing with the sins of others in God’s family, but it must always be done with a heart that recognizes itself as a forgiven sinner. When done right, confronting sin is done more often with tears and a broken heart than with anger and condemnation.

d. **Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground:** Jesus seemed to do everything He could to calm the excitement and tension at the scene, probably out of concern for the woman’s dignity and safety. Again, Jesus **wrote on the ground.**

- i. He didn't stare down the accusing men in an act of intimidation. Jesus did everything in this situation to make things less tense, not more tense. He did not try to change them through intimidation.
 - ii. Jesus continued to care about the shame of the woman and did what He could to ease it. Shame may serve a helpful purpose, but God never intended it to be a permanent condition.
5. ([Jhn 8:9](#)) The accusers respond by leaving.

Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even to the last*. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

- a. **Being convicted by their conscience:** They were **convicted** by what they **heard** from Jesus. Seemingly it wasn't what Jesus wrote (though that may have had something to do with it). More so, it was what Jesus *said* that **convicted** their **conscience**.
- i. It spoke well of these men that their conscience was not dead or burned over. They still could be **convicted by their conscience**. They were now more aware of their own sin than the sin of the woman.
- b. **Went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last:** We understand why they left; they were **convicted by their conscience**. It's not immediately clear why they left in order; **the oldest even to the last**. Perhaps the oldest left first because they most easily understood that Jesus was talking about them.
- i. "The continuous tense in this last verb gives the thought of something like a procession. They kept on going out." (Morris)
- ii. Some speculate that Jesus wrote on the ground an account of their own sins, beginning from the oldest to the youngest – explaining the order of their departure.
- c. **The woman standing in the midst:** This is the only reference in the account to the physical posture of the woman. It is possible that the religious leaders who brought her to Jesus forced her to stand through the ordeal. Yet human nature and the repeated stooping posture of Jesus suggests that the woman, for all or some of this ordeal, was in a low posture on the ground.
- i. The ancient Greek word translated **standing** (*histemi*) often means "to stand," but is sometimes understood in a figurative sense – such as to set or to place, as in [Matthew 4:5](#) and [18:2](#). The phrase **standing in the midst** doesn't demand that the woman was actually standing upon her feet.

6. ([Jhn 8:10-11](#)) Jesus challenges the woman to sin no more.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

- a. **When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman:** The accusers left as Jesus was bowed down to the ground, writing in the dirt.
- b. **Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?** With her accusers gone, there was no one left to **condemn** the woman, and Jesus Himself did not **condemn** her.
- c. **She said, "No one, Lord":** The woman – guilty of sin, and a great sin – knew the goodness of having no condemnation. She passed from sin and a death sentence to forgiveness and life.
- d. **Neither do I condemn you:** In a sense, *Jesus took her guilt upon Himself*, especially as He so demonstrably

stooped down. He alone was *without sin among* them. Knowing all things, He had the right to cast the first stone – but He did not. The woman found refuge in connection to Jesus.

i. “They knew the thrill of exercising power to condemn; Jesus knew the thrill of exercising the power to forgive.” (Barclay)

ii. In a sense, Jesus here modeled the great truth of [Romans 8:1](#): That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

e. **Go and sin no more**: Jesus sent her away with a call to stop her sin, and to *continue* stopped in regard to that sin. He sent her away without ever approving of or accepting her sin.

i. “The form of the command implies a ceasing to commit an action already started: ‘Stop your sinful habit’. And the ‘no more’ points to the thought of no return.” (Morris)

ii. Jesus did several things with these powerful words.

- He recognized that what the woman had done was **sin**, because He told her to *stop* sinning.
- He told her to repent, and to not continue her sin.
- He gave her hope that her life could go on in freedom from sexual sin.
- He gave her a word of hope to speak against the shame that would later likely threaten to overwhelm her life.

iii. The woman needed hope because the consequences of her sin would be severe enough. After this she would likely be shunned by her community, and rejected by her husband, perhaps even divorced (assuming she was married or betrothed).