

**PROVERBS SERIES THIRTEEN
THE TOOL IN EVERYONE’S MOUTH**

Dr. Roger Barrier

Proverbs 10:11,32;12:25;15:28;;18:6,7,21;25:15;26:24

Jorge Rodriguez was the meanest bandit on the Texas-Mexico border. He often slipped across the border to raid the banks of South Texas. Stealing them blind.

Finally the Texans decided to put the toughest Texas Ranger they had on the case. After only a few days of searching, the Ranger found the bandit in a dingy, dusty saloon south of the border. He bolted into the bar, pulled both guns, and yelled, “Okay, stick ‘em up, Jorge; you’re under arrest! I know you’ve got the money.”

Suddenly a little guy over in the corner butted in. “Wait, wait... just a moment, senior,” he said. “Jorge does not speak English. He’s my amigo, so I’ll translate for you.”

The Ranger explained, “Look, we know he’s the bandit we’ve been looking for. We know he’s stolen over \$50,000 US dollars. We want it back NOW. Either he pays up or I’ll fill him full of holes. You tell him that!”

“Okay, okay! I’ll tell him.” So the fellow turned to Jorge and repeated in Spanish everything the Ranger had said.

Jorge listened, frowned, then responded in Spanish. “Okay, I give up. Tell him to go down to the well just south of town, count four stones down from the top of the well, then pull out the one loose stone. All the money I have stolen I’ve hidden behind the stone.”

The translator turned to the Texas Ranger and said, “Jorge says, ‘Go ahead, you big mouth; go ahead and shoot. I’ll never tell where the money is.’”

Applicable proverbs

● SLIDE: Prov 18:21: The tongue has the power of life and death,

● SLIDE: Prov 25:15: A gentle tongue can break a bone.

● SLIDE: Prov 10:11: The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.

● SLIDE: Prov 26:24: A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit.

TONGUE PROP: Proverbs has more to say about the use of the tongue than any other theme or topic.

● SLIDE: It is a marvelous instrument: Good for eating, tasting, rolling, talking, praising, worshipping, gossiping, telling jokes, teaching, hollering—and when you can’t think of anything else to say, you can even stick it out at some one.

It can do all that—and it only weighs 2 ounces!

The tongue is a slippery master. Can get a grip on a finger or a toe—but it is most difficult to get a good grip on the tongue. Besides, it is messy and sticky.

● SLIDE: Whenever I go to the doctor he says, “Stick out your tongue.”

“But it is my stomach that hurts—not my tongue.”

“That doesn’t really matter. Stick out your tongue.”

The tongue is indicative of our physical health. It is usually pink. But when our digestive system isn't working right, it can have a yellowish, brown covering. With some diseases it is bright red.

If you want to know how what a person's life and character is really like, listen to their tongue.

☺ SLIDE: Prov 18:4: The words of a man's mouth are deep waters,

Words come out of the depth of our being.

☺ SLIDE: Prov 15:28: The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.

What might this verse look like in practice.

☺ SLIDE: THE TONGUE HAS EXPLOSIVE POWER.

Have you ever considered the awesome power of the spoken word? For instance:

Waiter: What'll you have for dessert?

First diner: Nothing for me.

Second diner: I'm stuffed.

Third diner: I couldn't eat another bite.

Waiter: Dessert comes with the dinner.

First diner: Ice cream.

Second diner: Pecan pie.

Third diner: Chocolate layer cake.

One sentence can change everything.

A judge speaks some words and a guilty prisoner is taken to a cell on death row.

Dave Bury: Federal Judge: "To see people quiver at the words of a federal judge who is sentencing them to federal prison for committing a federal crime.

A gossip makes a phone call and a reputation is blemished or perhaps ruined.

Seize a man in violence and maim him for life, perhaps even kill him, and his children and his community may raise a monument to him.

But ruin a man's reputation so that his children despise him, and you deprive him of far more than just his life.

A cynical professor makes a snide remark in a lecture and a student's faith is destroyed.

☺ SLIDE: For every word in Adolph Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, 125 people died in World War II.

☺ SLIDE: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

Isn't that the stupidest thing you ever heard?

Story: Elementary school: Acne and Mrs. Horne.

Wounds can wound the heart to the deepest level: Probably a wounding worse than a physical blow is the statement,

☺ SLIDE: "I'm sorry I ever married you."

☉ SLIDE: How many of you can ever forget that a parent said to you in a fit of rage, “I wish you had never been born.”

☉ SLIDE: Prov 12:18: Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Heart in atiral flutter. In emergency room. Frightened. Outcome in doubt.

Doris Wanslee: “I have prayed about this. God made it very clear to me that everything is going to be well. Be at peace.” I trust Doris. She knows God. Six months struggle. Calm peace all would be well. I remembered Doris’ words.

I want to use the wise words which soothe and heal; which comfort and encourage; which try to put the best interpretation on any action.

☉ SLIDE: THE TONGUE CAN GET US AND OTHERS INTO A LOT OF TROUBLE.

I don’t think I need to spend much time here. We all understand this.

How many would be willing to admit that your tongue has gotten you in trouble? Raise hands.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 18:7: A fool's mouth is his undoing, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 18:6: A fool's lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 6:2-3: if you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth, 3 then do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands: Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor!

☉ SLIDE: Prov 11:9: With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.

Perhaps like me you’ve received a phone call from someone who says, “I want to tell you about so-and-so.”

And I’ll say, “Wait a minute. May I quote you?”

There’s usually a long pause. And then they’ll say, “Well, I’m not sure that would be a good idea.”

“If you’re not interested in putting your name on it, if you’re not interested in being there when we confront the individual, I’m not interested in listening to what you’ve got to say.”

☉ SLIDE: THE TONGUE CAN BRING US AND OTHERS A LOT OF BLESSING AND DELIGHT.

Spend most time here. I want to use my tongue for health and healing.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 25:11: A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

Jake Ellis bible teacher: Youth Sunday. Assigned to teach Jake’s men’s class.

R’s: roger really runs well. R’s sounded like w’s.

Talked too fast: “We can’t understand you.”

Studied. Applied:

Jake: “I think you have the spiritual gift of teaching. This may be your calling from God for life.”
Speech lessons for two years after I came to Tucson.

☺ SLIDE: Prov 10:32: The lips of the righteous know what is fitting,

Little boy reciting Patrick Henry’s famous statement: “Give me puberty or give me death.”

Tact is one of the lost arts of our day, isn’t it?

I heard about a man who lacked tact. He just couldn’t say things graciously.

He and his wife owned a poodle. They loved this dog. It was the object of their affection. The wife was to take a trip abroad and the first day away she made it to New York. She called home and asked her husband, “How are things?” He said, “The dog’s dead!” She was devastated.

After collecting her thoughts, she asked, “Why do you do that? Why can’t you be more tactful?”

He said, “Well, what do you want me to say? The dog died.” She said, “Well, you can give it to me in stages.

For example, you could say when I call you from New York, ‘The dog’s on the roof.’ And when I get to London and call, you could tell me, ‘Honey, the dog fell off the roof.’ When I call you from Paris, you could add, ‘Honey, the dog had to be taken to the vet. In fact, he’s in the hospital, not doing well.’

Finally, when I call you from Rome, you might say, ‘Honey, brace yourself. Our dog died.’ I could handle that.”

The husband paused and said, “Oh, I see. I understand. I’ll do better.”

Then she asked, “By the way, how’s mother?” He said, “She’s on the roof.”

We are talking about what is fitting.

When a woman asks, “Do I look fat?” The immediate response is, “No.” That is automatic.

When she asks, “How do I look in my new outfit?” Never say, “Who let the dogs out?”

That would not be fitting.

But what if she does look fat? What if the outfit is awful? What do you say?

☺ SLIDE: Robert Brault: “Today I bent the truth to be kind, and I have no regret, for I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true.”

☺ SLIDE: Prov 12:25: An anxious heart weighs a man down,
but a kind word cheers him up.

In a country church in a small village an altar boy serving the priest at Sunday mass accidentally dropped the cruet of wine (anxious moment!). The village priest struck the altar boy sharply on the cheek and in a gruff voice said, “Leave the altar and don’t ever come back.”

That boy grew up to become Marshall Tito, the communist dictator of Yugoslavia throughout the years of the cold war.

In the cathedral of a large city an altar boy serving the priest at Sunday mass accidentally dropped the cruet of wine. With a warm twinkle in his eye, the Bishop gently whispered, “Some day you will be a priest.”

That boy grew up to become Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

Many proverbs giving advice on how to use the tongue wisely and well.

☺ SLIDE: Prov 15:1: A gentle answer turns away wrath,

but a harsh word stirs up anger.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 24:26: An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 28:23: He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 15:4: The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life.

A few months after moving to a small town, a woman complained to her neighbor about the poor service at the drug store. Hoped that the neighbors would tell the owner of the drug store.

Next time the woman was in the store, the druggist greeted her with a smile. How happy he was to see her.

Hoped she liked the town. Please tell him if there is anything that he could do to help her and her husband get settled. Then promptly filled her order.

Later told her neighbor, "I suppose you told the druggist how poor I thought his service was." "Well, no," she replied. "I hope you don't mind, but I told him that you were amazed at how he'd built up his little store and that you thought it was one of the best drug stores that you had ever seen."

☉ SLIDE: One reason a dog has so many friends is that it spends more time wagging its tail than wagging its tongue.

☉ SLIDE: USE THE TONGUE WISELY. CONTROL IT WELL.

The reason God gave us two ears and one mouth is to remind us to listen twice as much as we talk.

☉ SLIDE: Usually the first screw that gets loose in a person's head is the one that controls the tongue.

"I seldom feel sorry for the things I do not say."

☉ SLIDE: Prov 17:28: Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps his mouth shut, and discerning if he holds his tongue.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 13:3: He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 10:19: When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

☉ SLIDE: There are two kinds of people who don't say much: those who are quiet and those who talk a lot.

☉ SLIDE: "Empty trucks make the most noise."

The night Jessie was born I was sitting torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings and why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly, he said things I knew were true.

I was unmoved, except to wish he would go away. He finally did.

Another came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for over an hour, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply and left.

I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.

☉ SLIDE: Ephesians 4:29: Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Explain Ephesians 4:29. Sums up the proverbs.

☉ SLIDE: Prov 10:13: Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning,

Some years ago Alexander Woolcott described a scene in a New York City hospital where a grief-stricken mother sat in a hospital lounge in stunned silence, tears streaming down her cheeks. She had just lost her only child and she was gazing blindly into space as the chief nurse tried to talk to her.

“Did you notice, Mrs. Norris, the shabby little boy sitting in the hall just next to your daughter’s room?”
No, she hadn’t noticed.

“There’s a case. That little boy’s mother is a French woman who was brought in one week ago by ambulance from their shabby one-room apartment where they lived since they immigrated to this country less than three weeks ago. They lost all their people in the old country and knew nobody here.

“The two only had each other. Every day that lad has come here and sat there from sun up to sun down in the vain hope that his mother would awaken and speak to him. Now he has no home at all.”

Mrs. Norris was listening now. So, the nurse went on.

“Fifteen minutes ago his mother died, dropped like a pebble off into the boundless ocean, and now it is my duty to go out and tell that little seven-year-old fellow that he is all alone in the world.”

The head nurse paused and then said to Mrs. Norris, “I don’t suppose,” she said, hesitantly, “I don’t suppose that you would go out and tell him for me.”

Woolcott said that what happened in the next few moments was something that he would remember forever.

Mrs. Norris stood up, dried her tears, went out and put her arms around the boy and took that homeless child to her childless home—and in the darkness, they became lights for each other.

“Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning.”