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 HCC Sermon
 Prov 10:19-21

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Ben Kingsley... still remembers his parents voicing their disapproval of his acting career.
2. Need: Words hurt more than we think.
3. Subject: What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak?
4. Text: Proverbs 10:19-21
5. Preview: What does God want us to do? What is the reason for God's instruction? What is the purpose for God's instruction?

BODY

- I. **Think before speaking (10:19)**
 - A. Solomon teaches that more words means more trouble and less words means less trouble (10:19).
 - a. We can imagine situations where speaking a lot gets you in trouble.
 1. Speaking more reveals an ignorance of you sinfulness (10:19a)
 - b. Only God's words can do what we wish our words could.
 2. Speaking less reveals an understanding of your sinfulness (10:19b)
 - a. Solomon teaches that a prudent person has insight to speak less
 - b. For when you speak less, it requires you to listen to others.
 - B. Jesus teaches that words reveal the state of your heart (Matt 12:34a-35; 15:18-19).
 - C. Think about if you should speak or not
 - II. **Think before speaking because **your words matter to God** 10:20)**
 - A. Solomon teaches that from a good heart comes priceless words and from an evil heart comes worthless words (10:20).
 1. Solomon describes the words of a righteous person as priceless (10:20a).
 2. Solomon describes the heart of a wicked person as worthless (10:20b).
 - a. The wicked refers to a person who believes that they are always right
 - b. A person's character determines whether or not they will be heard.
 - c. Wicked character causes us to tune out their words.
 - B. God's words should influence your words (Exod 20:7; 16).
 1. Your words should honor God (Exod 20:7)
 2. Your words should honor others (Exod 20:16)
 - C. Evaluate your words by God's word.
 - III. **Think before speaking because God cares about what you say so that **your words may help others** (10:21)**
 - A. Solomon teaches that words from the wise help others while words from the foolish fail to help anyone (10:21)
 1. The words from the righteous help others
 2. The words from the foolish fails to help others
 - B. God expects us to speak the truth to help others (Eph 4:15, 25, 29)

1. We speak the truth because we are a covenant community (4:25)
 2. We speak the truth to help others become more like Christ (Eph 4:15)
 3. We speak the truth to help others experience grace (Eph 4:29)
 4. We speak the truth to help others know God.
- C. Craft your words to help rather than hurt.

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: Think before speaking because your words matter to God so that your words may help others.
2. Closing Image: The embrace of the Queen of England made Ben Kingsley want to tell everyone that his mom loved him.
 - a. In 2002, the Queen of England knighted Ben Kingsley.
 - b. The king of the universe has embraced us, so our words should reveal that God loves you

MANUSCRIPT

Ben Kingsley, an Academy-Award winning actor, who has starred in films such as *Iron Man 3*, *Schindler's List*, and *Gandhi* still remembers his parent's disapproval of his acting career. His parents expected him to go to medical school and become a doctor like his father and brother. But when he decided to go into acting, his parents mocked him. He remembers his mother saying to him: "When are you going to finish with this acting lark". Despite being a 76-year-old man, he still remembers the hurtful words of his parents.

Words hurt more than we think. We've heard the saying: "Stick and Stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." While bruises may heal and bones may mend, hurtful words leave wounds that still fester and fail to ever heal. Some of us still remember someone saying to us: "You're ugly. You're fat. You'll never amount to anything. How come you can't ever be like your brother or sister or cousin? You are a disappointment." We not only remember the words, but we remember the face, the time, and the place when we heard those words. **Words hurt more than we think.**

While we may remember being the recipient of hurtful words, I wonder if we ever think about how we might be the one who delivers those verbal jabs as well. Do we think about the poison-tipped darts that proceed from our mouths? It's out of our mouths that words hurt others. Our words are the ones that cause offense. When others reflect on the hurtful things said to them, they remember your face, your voice, your tone, and your gesture.

Being at home in close quarters, I am sure that there have been many opportunities for verbal sparring between spouses, between siblings, and between parent and child. Although you may not be living with your immediate families, this war of words could also happen over

text message or video chat. When the situation becomes heated and tensions rise, we fail to realize how our words hurt others rather than to ease tension.

What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak? How do we be wise with our words? How do mobilize our words to help rather than hurt? **What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak?**

To answer this question please turn with me to Proverbs, chapter 10 if you haven't turned there already. Our church has been going through a series in Proverbs in a series titled: Wisdom for Life. So we'll focus our attention there. Proverbs, chapter 10. Proverbs, chapter 10.

We'll be looking at three questions: What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak? What is the reason for God's instruction? What is the purpose for God's instruction? What does God want us to do? What is the reason? What is the purpose?

What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak? **Think before speaking.** Pause before you open your mouth to say something. Ponder on what you will say. Consider what you plan to say before saying it. **Think before speaking.**

Solomon teaches that more words means more trouble and less words mean less trouble. The more you speak, the more trouble you will potentially find yourself in. But the less you speak the less trouble you will potentially find yourself in. Look with me at Proverbs, chapter 10, verse 19. It says this: *"When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips are prudent."*

There are two types of people being compared here. A person who speaks a lot. A person who speaks little. Now the Proverb doesn't mean that everyone should practice a vow

of silence. This would make mealtimes and small group discussions rather quiet. Instead, Solomon is explaining why we should speak with thoughtfulness rather than carelessness.

We can imagine situations where speaking a lot gets you into more trouble. When parents repeatedly instruct their adult children: don't forget to wear a mask when you go shopping, don't go out too often, or make sure that you stock up enough food, well-intended instruction turns into nagging. It can also happen in reverse. The child tells their at-risk parents: "Don't go out. Don't go buy groceries. I'll bring them to you." And of course the child discovers through track your parent app on your phone that your parents ignored your instruction and went out anyway. And it leads to conflict. These types of conflict happens between spouses and siblings and friends. More words mean more trouble.

A parent discovers their child watching television when they should be reading. The parent asks the child: "Have you been watching television?" Now the child has a choice to make. The child can either lie or tell the truth. Both will get the child into trouble. If the child lies and says: "No", then the child also has come up with a falsified reason for why they were not watching television leading to more trouble. Instead of taking away privileges for a day because the child watched television, they may take away privileges for two days because the child watched television and lied about it. More words mean more trouble.

Why do more words lead to more trouble? **Speaking more reveals an ignorance of our sinfulness.** Often times, we speak more because we think that our words might be able to get ourselves out of trouble. In the case of a child caught watching television, the child thinks that if they craft a believable story, they can get themselves out of trouble. The nagging parent believes that through their persistent and repetitive words they can finally get their children to

do what they want. We speak more words because we believe that our words are able to do something. This reveals the pride that exists in our hearts that we think by speaking more we can make others do what we want.

Only God's words can do what we wish our words could. Only God can say: "Let there be light" and light shines into the darkness. Only God can say let the dry land be separated from the waters and the waters part. When we say let there be light, we have to ask a family member to hit a light switch or whip out our smart phone to turn on the light. When we say let there be food, we need to put in a door dash order or heat something up from the refrigerator. We fail to see how our words fall short of God's words. This is a heart issue.

Speaking less reveals an understanding of your sinfulness. To speak less reveals that you know that you have an inclination in your heart to use words for your own benefit. You desire to use words to further your own ends. When you restrain your lips, you give yourself a moment to think and determine whether or not your words should be even spoken.

Solomon teaches that a prudent person has insight to speak less. The word: prudent refers to a person who is able to see a situation and its complexities and speak in a helpful manner. For this person is able to craft their words to communicate something in a succinct fashion yet pregnant with insight. This person is like an expert chess player able to see all the communication possibilities and chooses the best one.

When you speak less, it requires you to listen to others. This means you realize that you may not quite understand the entire context of the situation. This should prompt you to ask more questions to ascertain what might be going on before responding. Then when you respond you'll be able to give a more informed response.

Jesus teaches that words reveal the state of your heart. He says in the gospel of Matthew: *“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure brings forth evil”* (Matt 12:34a-35). The words you speak reveals either your need for control or your trust in God’s sovereignty. Your speech reflects either a heart of dislike or love toward a person. Jesus echoes the teaching of Solomon that how much one speaks reveals how much they truly understand about themselves.

Think about if you should speak or not. Are you trying to use your words to exert control over a situation? Are you trying to speak a lot in order to show how much smarter you are than another person? Are you trying to speak a lot, so that people would do what you say? If so, then it might be wise to refrain from speaking. Will your words encourage someone? Will speaking contribute to the conversation rather than draw attention to yourself? Will your words point others to God? If so, then it might be wise to speak. **Think about if you should speak or not.**

What is the reason for God’s instruction to think before speaking? Think before speaking because **your words matter to God.** God cares about you say. Your words have value to them. God values your choice of words. **Your words matter to God.**

Solomon teaches that from a good heart comes priceless words and from an evil heart comes worthless words. Words spoken from a good heart have worth equal to precious gems. Words from an evil heart are worth less than pennies.

Solomon writes this in verse 20: *“The tongue of the righteous is choice of silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth”*. This verse contrasts two types of people: the righteous and the wicked.

The righteous refers to those who conform to a moral standard. In the context of the Old Testament, the Mosaic law shapes the moral standard of Israel. Likewise, the New Covenant through Christ shapes the moral standard of the church. The righteous person has a heart that pursues the Lord.

Solomon describes the words of a righteous person as priceless. He compares the tongue of the righteous to “choice silver”. Other translations use “pure silver” (CSB) and “best silver” (NET). The phrase: “choice silver” refers to silver that has had all its impurities burned out so that the percentage of silver is quite high. This makes the silver valuable in any reputable market.

Solomon then provides a contrast. **Solomon describes the heart of a wicked person as worthless. The wicked refers to a person who believes that they are always right.** They don’t need correction. Correction in the eyes of the wicked person is reserved for all the other people out there. For they think that their “maturity” makes them above God’s Word. Their hearts believe: “God’s word is for all those little people. But it doesn’t apply to me because I’m smarter than what God has to say.” This leads to wicked people to twist the covenant values of God so that it leads to sinful behavior.

The wicked say: “It’s right to watch or stream media content that I don’t purchase. After all, media companies like Netflix or Disney already make millions of dollar anyways. What do they care if I watch a 2-hour movie that is currently on wide release at a theater? It’s more

important for me to get my media fix rather than pay for it. And that money I'd pay to go to the movie theater, I'll give it to charity."

Why does Solomon connect words to heart? As mentioned before, from the heart comes a person's words. A person's character determines what he or she speaks. But a person's character also determines whether or not you're going to listen to them. For instance, you're not going to look for marriage advice from a person who has multiple failed marriages. You're not going to listen to financial advice from someone who struggles with debt. No one listens to the words of a wicked person because they lack the character that backs up their words.

The wicked are also willing to disadvantage the community in order to benefit him or herself. Think about the many people who have hoarded hand sanitizer, N95 masks, and Clorox wipes, so that they can in turn sell it at marked-up prices. They're using the virus situation to make a quick buck. **Wicked character causes us to tune out their words.**

What principle would help us to speak words of value? **God's word should influence your words.** The words of God as found in the Bible should affect how you form and shape your words. When you think about the Ten commandments, there are two commandments I can think of that would have impacted the way an Israelite would have spoken.

First, **your words should honor God.** There is the command: *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain"* (Exodus 20:7). When an Israelite spoke about God with others, it should always be done with reverence and honor. To lie about God's character or even defame his reputation would result in death.

Second, **your words should honor others**. The second command, I think about is *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”* (Exodus 20:16). This command instructs Israelites not to speak falsely about their neighbors. This would be lying or slander. Israel prohibited such speech. These principles still apply to us as the church. For our words should honor both God and people. We are to speak the truth to people rather than half-truths. We should also speak truths about people as well rather than demean them.

The words of a person, who allows God to shape his or her words, have value. Words spoken through the filter of God’s covenant is able to bring encouragement and even life to one who is downtrodden. I think of how God has used the words of Hudson Taylor to encourage me even though he is long dead. “God’s work done God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” “Unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith.” I also remember the words of a sister from my days in college: “God doesn’t call those who are equipped but equips those who are called.” These words have great value because they stir within us a greater trust and awe of God.

If this is the principle that we live by, then what should we do? **Evaluate your words before you speak them**. What would God think about the words that I’m about to speak? Would these words honor God? Would they honor others? Will my words speak the truth? **Evaluate your words by God’s word.**

What is the purpose of God’s instruction to think before speaking? Think before speaking because your words matter to God so that **you may help others**. The purpose of our words is ultimately to help, serve, and build up others. Help others with your words. Aid them. Assist them.

Solomon teaches that words from the righteous help others while words from the foolish fail to help others. Words from the righteous help. Words from the foolish hurt. Look with me at Proverbs, chapter 10, verse 21. It says: *“The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.”*

The words from the righteous helps others. The word: feed can also be translated nourish or shepherd. In other words, the words that proceed from a righteous person provides care for the listener. The word: “Shepherd” in the Ancient Near East represented an ideal quality of the king. For the Shepherd king would lead, revive, and protect his people. The words from a person speaking out from his relationship with God will provide such help and care.

The words from the foolish fails to help others. Although the fool may hear wisdom, he fails to listen and understand it. He doesn’t know how much to say, when to speak, and what to speak because he doesn’t care what God thinks. He lacks the sensibility or as in the Hebrew it says the heart to pay attention to words that lead to life. I wonder if the compiler of Proverbs placed this proverb so close to the nine lectures found in chapters one to nine as to ask a rhetorical question to his readers: “Are you going to be wise and listen or a fool and ignore what has been said?”

What does it mean for the fool to die? It may not necessarily mean that a person who speaks at the wrong time and the wrong thing will physically die. But it may allude to the death of relationships. If you insult someone’s character, then you may burn that relational bridge. If you express how much you despise your parents, then it could lead to a relational death. One poorly spoken word could lead to an uncle and aunt not being invited to family gatherings.

Many of us can probably think about something foolish that we said that lead to relational conflict and eventually to the death of a relationship.

God expects us to speak the truth to help others. God desires us to listen to wisdom and then mobilize our words to help others through speaking the truth. Why should we speak the truth? Speaking the truth can sting. To confront someone and tell them that their words were hurtful can lead to tension. Yet we are expected to tell the truth because otherwise a person may not recognize the pain caused by their words. Our motivation for speaking truth is not love.

We speak the truth because we are a covenant community. We are spiritual family: brothers and sisters in Christ. For Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians: *“Therefore having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak truth to one another for we are members one of another”* (Eph 4:25).

We speak the truth to help others become more like Christ. As believers we are all on the journey of sanctification to be more like Christ. Our desire is to conform every aspect of our lives to the character of Christ. Sometimes, we need instruction on how to do this. We need brothers and sisters to help us identify spiritually unhelpful behavior. Paul also says this in the letter to the Ephesians: *“Rather speaking the truth in love are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”* (Eph 4:15).

We speak the truth to help others experience grace. Oftentimes in our spiritual life we will fail because of our inclination toward our flesh. But we need the help of others to remind us of God’s grace and to get back up again by the help of his Spirit. Paul provides us this

instruction: *“Let no corrupting words come out of your mouths, but only that which is good for building up, as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear”* (Eph 4:29).

We speak the truth to help others to know God. For those us who are Christians, we have the most valuable message to speak as well. It’s the message of the gospel. Sharing the gospel with others honors God because it highlights the greatness of God and his mercy toward sinful humanity. For he would send his Son to die on a cross for our sins and rise from the dead, so that we might have new life in him. This message also honors others because it speaks the truth of the human condition. Due to sin, we are incapable of coping with our brokenness on our own. We need God’s help to save us from the mire of our sin. And if anyone believes in the gospel, then they will have the confidence to know that nothing on this earth, neither trial, hunger, poverty, war, or death will ever separate them from God.

What should we do in light of God desiring us to use our words to help others? **Craft your words to help rather than to hurt.** Choose carefully which words you will utter. Don’t just say: “See! I’ve told them the truth” without regard to how you said it. For often times, when we tell people the truth, we want them to understand and believe what we have said. This requires us to consider how we might use kind, gentle, and apt words to communicate the truth. It’s one thing to say: “You always ignore me when I have something important to say!” But it’s another thing to say: “It hurts me when you ignore me because I feel unloved and uncared for.” For it’s not just the general content that we ought to care about, but we should care about the words and tone by which we speak.

What does God want us to do when we prepare to speak? **Think before speaking because your words matter to God so that you may help others.**

Ben Kingsley may still remember the hurtful words of his parents. But he also remembers another event. In 2002, the Queen of England knighted him. He says this of the experience in an interview: "I told you about my parents, and the fact that any kind of embrace was totally absent from life. So to be embraced by Her Majesty... I felt like stopping people in the street, saying my [mom] loves me, you know. Because that's what it felt like, to me – the filling of a vacuum in the universe." **The embrace of the Queen of England made Ben Kingsley want to tell everyone that his mom loved him.**

Now we may not be embraced by a human king or queen. But we have been embraced by the king of the universe. For he sent his Son to die on a cross and rise again, so that we can be transformed from a pauper to an heir of the kingdom. **The king of the universe has embraced us, so our words should reveal that God loves us.**