

STICKS + STONES

"WORDS THAT HEAL"

PROVERBS 18:21; 25:11

This Week's Core Competency

Self-control – I have the power, through Christ, to control myself. Titus 2:11-13, *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

Self-control is most often thought of as restrictive. If I can “control myself” then I will prevent myself from doing something foolish, harmful or just plain embarrassing. When it comes to speech, self-control is often thought of as restricting unpleasant or unkind language usually resulting from anger or lust. If I can just keep from saying bad things, then I will often feel successful in displaying self-controlled speech.

Speaking profanely, gossiping or insulting others - each registers as a serious failure in self-control. Cleaning up negative speech is really only half the battle. Self-controlled speech is not only silenced profanity. Often I need to speak up, even when others may not like what I must say. If God provides an opportunity to speak for Him and I fail to do so out of fear, I am lacking in self-control regarding speech. Or if I use an opportunity to speak for Him, for my own glory or satisfaction, I

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth,

And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

—Proverbs 15:23

am not under His control. I have lost self-control over my speech when I speak to fulfill myself.

People of differing views work around the clock to get distinct and memorable messages into the current news cycle. One “deck-clearing” communication tactic often used is “de-legitimization.” Speakers and pundits seek to silence competing voices by showing an opponent to not be worthy of the public’s attention. This de-legitimization usually occurs using a few well-worn methods. The first challenge is often against a person’s character. This *ad hominem* attack seeks to discredit the views of others by showing the hypocrisy, inconsistency or even evil actions or motives of the opposing spokesperson. A wonderful and helpful message can be silenced if someone can disqualify the voice of the speaker due to errors committed. Attacks on a person’s character often have little to do with the validity of anyone’s message. Silence by shame is an effective tactic of muzzling a worthy viewpoint.

A second means of silencing someone is through an attack on intelligence. If a person cannot be shamed into silence, he or she can often be intimidated into reticence through a perceived lack of proficiency. This play of mockery or argument *ab absurdo* seeks to silence others through ridicule. A proclaimed lack of reason or logic is often enough to silence a needed voice. Much of our visual media today seeks to paint opponents as absurd or outrageous. If someone is seen as a fool, then nothing they say really matters.

Through self-control, we need to work diligently to maintain integrity so as to not be silenced or dismissed by shame. Our ways and our words should be such that no one’s *ad hominem* attack

can stick (1 Peter 2:12). We also should work to have reasoned and well-prepared answers for all who would object to our views about morals, ethics and faith (1 Peter 3:15). Self control gives us a platform to stand on, even when facing an accusing enemy. Self-control also helps us speak what is good and right, even if it is not accepted by the majority.

Perhaps the saddest expression of failed self-control is when a believer resorts to using ad hominem or ad absurdo forms of argumentation. These two forms of argumentation are the lowest forms and are usually an admission of failure. Self-control in speech means that we do not have to resort to insults of integrity or intelligence to get a point across. Self-control with my words means avoiding personal character attacks and avoiding the temptation to ridicule someone else as unintelligent for their views. Shine the light rather than curse the darkness. Self-controlled speech can be a beautiful thing that even our enemies may envy.

day **1** **ENCOUNTER** – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

READ:

Proverbs 18:21

*The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 25:11

*A word aptly spoken
is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle the main subject of Proverbs 18:21.
- * Draw an arrow from the main subject to each of the final outcomes influenced by this subject in Proverbs 18:21.
- * Draw a connecting line between the word “it” and the word it refers to in Proverbs 18:21.
- * Circle the word in Proverbs 25:11 that indicates comparison.
- * Underline the words of color in Proverbs 25:11.
- * Double underline the word the comparison illustrates in Proverbs 25:11.
- * Box the words that modify the main idea of Proverbs 25:11b.
- * Draw arrows from words in Proverbs 25:11 that correlate to words found in Proverbs 18:11.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. According to Proverbs 18:21b, what is being spoken of by the phrase “love it”?
2. Is the result of this love positive or negative? Explain.
3. Considering Proverbs 18:21, what advice would you give to someone from this verse?
4. What would be the purpose of “golden apples” in bowls or “settings of silver”?
5. What in Proverbs 25:11b is compared to the precious metals artistically described in 25:11a?
6. What is a “ruling”? Who makes these?
7. In Proverbs 25:11a, what does the inclusion of fine metals add to the value of 25:11b?
8. What difference does it make how a “ruling” is declared?
9. How does Proverbs 25:11 relate to Proverbs 25:12?
10. How do you “rightly” deliver a difficult or consequential message?
11. What connections do you see between Proverbs 18:21 and Proverbs 25:11?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

As we have observed from other studies in Proverbs, the literature of the Book of Proverbs is unique due to its subject matter and its method of delivery. The subject matter is Wisdom and the avoidance of its opposite, Folly. The style of the book is aphorism and cleverly crafted sayings. This collection of short sayings gives advice, warnings, and helpful observations about life and the way things work. The first nine chapters in Proverbs are the words of a loving father, giving advice to his younger children. Sections following this are sayings from Solomon and other great thinkers. Both of the proverbs we consider in this study are considered part of the Wisdom of Solomon. As a king, Solomon was regularly in the business of powerful words and consequential judgments. His word as a king could easily deliver life or death to its recipients. His judgments were prized by his subjects and set valuable precedents for future determinations. Proverbs 25 is replete with many references of living life with kings.

Proverbs 25:11 uses a common literary device known as a “simile.” A “simile” is defined as a figurative comparison between unrelated items, often using a helping word such as “like” or “as.” The “figurative unrelatedness” of the comparison is perhaps more important than helping words (“like/as”). “He runs as fast as the wind” is a solid simile. “Running fast” and the speed of a gusting wind are similar but typically unrelated. When compared, in this case with a helping word (“like/as”), the concepts of human movement and meteorological force become figuratively and powerfully expressive and meaningful. “He runs as fast as his brother,” would not be considered a simile. The comparison of two brothers running is not figuratively unrelated, even though the comparison uses a helping word (“like/as”).

Similes often take something common and compare it to something more expansive, more incredible or perhaps even more outrageous for effect or emphasis. If we were to read, “Sam ate his lunch like a ravenous lion,” we would most likely interpret this simile to mean that Sam was extremely hungry and most likely ate with little care for others around him. We may have never personally seen a ravenous lion eat but we can imagine the extreme nature of Sam’s hunger and his enthusiastic approach to

cleaning his plate!

This exaggerated form of comparison is what we find in Proverbs 25:11. Solomon wishes to heighten the extreme value and worthiness of well spoken words by showing how these words are like something rare and beautiful in his own culture. The “known” concept in the simile is the “ruling rightly given” found in Proverbs 25:11b. As a king, Solomon had to make many judgments and rulings for his people. The word “ruling” here is a commonly used word depicting the whole or completion of a collection of words, judgments, considerations. The word for “ruling” is stated twice, giving the sense of “a speech spoken” or “words that are worded.” A speech or a determination of a matter is often how the word “ruling” is used in the rest of the Book of Proverbs. Often it is used of “words” plural, meaning that more than just a word or phrase is being uttered by someone in a casual discussion. The speech in mind here in Proverbs 25:11 is a deliberate, well formed statement that is delivered with comprehensiveness and authority. This is more than quick wit or clever sayings. King Solomon is identifying words here that have power due to the authority of the speaker or due to the seriousness of the subject matter.

These “ruling” or authoritative words are described as “rightly given.” This colorful word is from the root word “wheel.” On the one hand, the sense of “words delivered on their wheel” could describe the wheel of a chariot or the grinding wheel of a grain mill that grinds down an enemy under its unrelenting revolutions. The “ruling” in mind here is one that is swift, complete and unfazed like the crushing weight of a fast-moving chariot wheel. Proverbs 20:26 states “A wise king winnows out the wicked; he drives the threshing wheel over them.” This “threshing wheel” of Proverbs 20:26 is the same word as “rightly given” in Proverbs 25:11. It is possible that Solomon is stating that the rulings of a king must be carried out with speed and thoroughness.

Another possibility for this phrase is that “rightly” or “fitly” means “with evenness” or “with steadiness like the wheels of a chariot.” Some have suggested that the dual use of the term “speech/ruling” could actually depict the image two wheels of a chariot that evenly and consistently roll out the righteous words or rulings of a king. Whether a “ruling” is

emphasizing speed or evenness, the big picture is that decisions or rulings made by an authoritative king are good and right and need to be a regular focus of the life of a leader.

If “speech” or a “ruling” and its delivery is the “known” component of the simile, what then could the cryptic “apples of gold in settings of silver” possibly mean? The phrase is a positive display of beauty, wealth, extravagance and generosity. The “apples” reference is most likely a description of actual fruit of a golden or orange color. Some have postulated “golden apples” were an exotic and rare form of fruit that perhaps only kings enjoyed. These could have been special pears, peaches or perhaps even a form of citrus fruit such as oranges. These fruits would be expensive and were perhaps worth much. The “silver settings” were most likely baskets or trays made of expensive silver. The silver would serve as an opulent display for rare, expensive and beautiful fruit. The image here is one that would make people gasp in awe and make kings exceedingly proud. The pairing of authoritative rulings delivered with timeliness and the courage of a faithful leader would be a great status symbol of success and blessing. A leader leading well and consistently rolling out justice, even with his well-chosen declarations and decrees, will have the fruit and the impressive clout that others may even envy.

The simile of Proverbs 25:11 is amazingly stark and impressive. But what does this shiny gem of kingly advice have to do with us who are not kings? We all participate in arenas of influence and leadership. Someone in our lives is looking up to us as a good example and faithful leadership. Are we preparing and delivering faithful communications of integrity and compassion? Are we doing the right thing and saying the right things consistently with a steady pattern of balanced deliberation? If so, we can enjoy the rich fruit of such faithful administration and communication. As Proverbs 18:21 states, we can eat “the fruit” of our tongues, which can give life if rightly used. Proverbs 25:11 is written by a king, but is wisdom for all who speak and lead.

Where do you speak with authority or power? In your home, you decide how positive and negative communication and consistent order is “rolled out.” Is good speech and constructive correction consistently shared or is it missing from your day-to-day routine? Are you able to deliver positive messages in your home? Are you able to communicate the difficult messages of accountability and discipline there? The balance and consistency of what we spread around our spheres of influence can deliver the power of life or death (Proverbs 18:21).

What is your communication like outside of your home? Your school, neighborhood, workplace, social media or places of entertainment are all places where you share the authoritative communication of your opinions and values. Are you consistent, balanced and just in your communication? Or are you erratic, heated, unwise or cowardly in the expression of your values, choices and opinions? Are your words and speeches something envied by others because of their value and beauty? Or do others pull away because your words are not what they could be?

Our communications are powerful and valuable assets. They are an investment that we make daily in the influence of others. Do we damage this influence through frantic or hateful exchanges? Do we fail to communicate things that we should because we are afraid of what others might think? Heaven help us to find the wisdom and beauty of communicating in the right way and consistently at the right time. Our self-controlled “rulings” can help others as well as ourselves.

The Message of the Passage

Increase the value of your leadership through balanced, consistent, and courageous communication.

day 4 EMBRACE – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes N STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

Simile - “The essential difference between simile and metaphor can best be expressed by the use of some helpful modern terminology. Here is a case in which ‘the Greeks’ did not ‘have a word for it’: the parts of a simile that we now call tenor and vehicle (thanks to I. A. Richards). The terms ‘tenor’ and ‘vehicle’ are perhaps not ideal indicators for the two parts of a simile but they have become traditional. . . . Other pairs of words have been suggested, but these are the two that are used without explanation by most scholars. These terms provide an important justification for revising our distinction between simile and metaphor. Let us define a simile as ‘a figurative comparison in which both tenor and vehicle are expressed (with or without a prosthesis [‘like’ or ‘as’])’ while a metaphor is ‘an implied comparison in which only the vehicle is stated’” (John Ziolkowski, *Plato’s Similes, Introduction*, Center for Hellenistic Studies Website, Harvard University, 2016). We could say that Proverbs 18:11 is a metaphor, with the tongue having generative powers of life, death and fruitfulness (the vehicle). We could say that Proverbs 25:11 is a simile, with the “rulings” (the tenor) being described as valuable like exotic fruit in settings of valuable silver (the vehicle).

v.11 **apples** “tappuwach [Hebrew word] from ; an apple (from its fragrance), i.e. the fruit or the tree (probably included others of the pome order, as the quince, the orange, etc)” (*Strong’s Concordance*, H8589).

v.11 **settings** “Pictures (AV), Baskets (RV): the word elsewhere suggests designs (immaterial, 18: 11b; or material, Lev. 26: 1b), therefore RSV’s a setting seems appropriate. The whole simile is of uncertain interpretation, but at least its components (with those of v12) carry associations of attractiveness, value and craftsmanship” (Derek Kidner, *TOTC Proverbs*, loc. 2435-2438).

v.11 **rulings** “dabar, [Hebrew] from H1696; a word; by implication, a matter (as spoken of) or thing; adverbially, a cause:—act, advice, affair, answer, any such (thing), because of, book, business, care, case, cause, certain rate, chronicles, commandment,” (*Strong’s Concordance*, H1697). More than just words. A collective idea comprised of many thoughts and words. This word “dabar” is repeated in the verse. Could be translated literally “speech spoken” or “sayings said.” Some see this duplication as adding to the meaning of two parts of a circle or to two wheels on an axle. See “rightly given” for allusions to words working like wheels.

v.11 **rightly given** “This peculiar form of speech, which appears to signify strictly ‘after the manner of its wheels, or on its wheels, ‘Is in reality equivalent to *justo tempore*, in *tempore suo*, [‘just in time, in due time’] is expressed as early as Symmachus and the Vulgate, as well as supported by the analogy of a similar Arabic expression, in which the radical word in like manner is used to describe time revolving in its circuit, moving on in the form of a ring, or after the manner of wheels. Compare also the well known vision of Ezekiel; (*Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Proverbs 25).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

When I was in 6th grade I was visiting a friend in her apartment complex. An argument broke out between two girls on the playground and soon it was an all out verbal war that was quickly heating up. I was a bystander but found myself defending one of the girls. A woman who had seen the whole thing from her apartment came outside and began chastising all of us. She was looking directly at me and pointing as she told us to stop the foolishness. Quickly I spoke up, "I'm not really in this, why are you talking to me?" "Because you look like the smartest one in the group!" she said. I was immediately ashamed of being involved but encouraged at the same time. The spoken word is powerful. My parents had told me I was smart before but hearing it from a stranger just reinforced it. Parents, we have an amazing opportunity to speak life and truth and courage into our kids. As adults, we have this privilege to all kids we come into contact with. What a powerful thing to recognize a positive trait in a child and then affirm it verbally. Try these phrases this week: "I love to watch you ____ you are good at it..." "One of my favorite memories of you is ..."; "I see God using you in ...". Speak life, hope and truth this week!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Proverbs 18:21; 25:11

1. What kind of power does the tongue have?
2. What does "aptly spoken" mean?
3. What are words aptly spoken like?

What Do You Think

Think about a time when someone said something kind to you or about you. How did that make you feel? How does it make you feel to speak encouraging words to others?

What R U Going To Do

This week's challenge: Speak true, encouraging words to five people. Look for opportunities to praise someone for a job well done or tell someone what you like best about them. Tell your small group on Sunday about your experience.

Core Comp

Self Control – I can take charge of myself with Jesus' help.

Memory Verse

Proverbs 18:21 – The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.