



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR AUGUST 17, 2012

GOOD WORDS

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. (Proverbs 25:11, NIV)

THE PROVERBS THEMSELVES ARE A COLLECTION OF “GOOD WORDS,” helping us think clearly about life as God would have us live it. Their brief insights are packed with the kind of instruction that pushes us toward excellence.

But in the midst of these good words are a number of reminders about speaking good words of our own. Let’s focus on Proverbs 25, from which we draw our chief passage today, emphasizing the beauty of a word aptly spoken. In the Hebrew, we find the word *ophen*, which simply means “fit for the circumstances.” It is a beautiful thing, a valuable thing, to say the right thing at the right time.

As we explore the proverbs surrounding this one, we find more help in recognizing just what constitutes an apt word:

- “Do not exalt yourself in the king’s presence” (v. 6). When we are in the midst of those greater than ourselves, we may think it necessary to bring ourselves up to their level by touting our own strengths. Rather, the wise speaker remains humble, waiting for the king to do the exalting.
- “Do not betray another man’s confidence” (v. 9). Our ability to keep what is personal information personal (even secret) helps secure our reputation as someone who is trustworthy.
- “Like an earring of gold...is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear” (v. 12). Sometimes the most fitting word is a word of appropriate correction. Just make sure you’ve earned the right to make such a delivery!
- “A gentle tongue can break a bone” (v. 15). There is unique power in the right words delivered in the right spirit at the right time.

It is good to be reminded here that everywhere we go—home, work, park, club—we are Christ’s ambassadors. And one of the most important lessons of diplomacy is knowing what to say when.

More where we’re looking

Read Proverbs 25:6-24. What other insights do you find about practices of a tongue that speaks fitting words versus one that does not?

Praises and curses

Read James 3:9-12. According to this passage, what kind of words are fitting for the tongue of one who follows Christ?

A rash man and his wise wife

Read the account of David, Nabal, and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. How are the words of Nabal so strongly contrasted with the words of Abigail? How do Abigail’s apt words fit the description of such speech as we have found it in our Proverbs and James passages?
