

The Window of the Heart
Victory over the Tongue
Proverbs 16:1-9
Jeff Conner. 8/30/2020

Proverbs 16:1–9

- [1] The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
- [2] All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
- [3] Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.
- [4] The LORD has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.
- [5] Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.
- [6] By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.
- [7] When a man's ways please the LORD,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- [8] Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.
- [9] The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps. (ESV)

Slide #1

The Window of the Heart
Victory Over the _____
Proverbs 16:1-9

Introduction

Good morning, [Nathanael and family on vacation.]

When I ask, what is the most powerful muscle in the human body? What comes to mind? You may be thinking of a quadriceps, pecs, the spine. Or perhaps if you

think of the heart muscle's endurance that contracts more than once per second for your whole life, which I guess is kind of obvious.

Maybe you're thinking metaphorically, about the heart. It is incredibly powerful when we speak of love or things that break the heart.

The muscle I'm speaking of is incredibly powerful. It is viewed as so powerful it can calm tensions between nations or move them to war. The muscle that can be the most hurtful to the ones we love and yet provide the most comfort in times of need.

The muscle, I'm referring to, if you haven't already figured it out...is the tongue.

Slide #2:

The Window of the Heart
Victory Over the Tongue
Proverbs 16:1-9

Victory over the Tongue? Yeah, that's realistic. Isn't that an impossible task? How can I have victory over the tongue. A daunting task, indeed. Well, if we have godly wisdom, it can help put things in perspective, produce humility and give us hope.

It has been said that the eyes are the window to the soul, I don't know if it is true but I would contend that our tongue is the window to our heart. That's what I title this message. I was trying to think of some other architectural feature than window like spigot, drain pipe, downspout, sewer pipe of the soul... those didn't quite flow poetically. You get the idea and we'll stick with window of the heart.

For those of you who know me it is very fitting that I get tasked to speak on the tongue. Mine is too often unbridled. Sometimes for good, too many times for not. As someone recently told me about me teaching on the tongue, "don't you love God's sense of humor?" I think he was joking.

The tongue is an interesting organ. Has many functions, aids in tasting food, swallowing, speech, whistling and tongue tricks. There are many. Tongue rolling is a genetic trait and it's fun to watch people who can't try. Some of my family can do it and love to make fun of me when I try.

I saw a headline for an article about a man who set the world record for weight lifting with his tongue. I wasn't aware that was a thing. I did not open the article to learn more, for fear that I might not be able to unsee something very disturbing.

Weeks ago when I started studying what the book of Proverbs said about the tongue, it was a daunting task. There is a lot. Hmmm, I wonder why? However, there are some themes that course through these passages that address our tongues, how we express ourselves in speech. It's very humbling and revealing.

There is much to be learned from Proverbs regarding this.

Passage overview

Beginning and end verses are related.

Read vv 1 and 9.

These verses emphasize the sufficiency and fullness of God's wisdom and provision for us. The personal name of God YHWH is used 7 times in these verses, Hmmm. That's a good number.

It doesn't mean he fixes everything that is said, and that if our intentions are good he will somehow fix our error. It does mean that he is sovereign over the answers to our speech. He may use us an example of a fool or as a sage, either way for his purpose and glory.

These verses recognize the sovereignty of our Lord. How do we understand this? Does our language, our tongue, reflect an understanding of who God is and how he operates?

Slide #3

1. The tongue reveals our heart by how we express the depths of God's wisdom

How do we view godly biblical wisdom? How do we look to his word? Are we smarter than him, sometimes I know I act like it. We need to seek his wisdom and not lean on our own understanding.

God will eventually accomplish his purposes. Charles Stanley “We cannot frustrate the will of God.” We cannot cause him to have to divert what he planned and change his plans because we did or failed to do something. We’re not that big.

My rebellious spirit does not like that. I want to think I have more autonomy and control of my circumstances than I really do. I have this partnership with God, I do my part, he does his part and we work together in a synergistic fashion. We’re a good team. God is more sovereign than we often give him credit for.

Having this perspective allows us to understand the other verses in Proverbs

Slide #4

Proverbs 10:31

[31] The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,
but the perverse tongue will be cut off. (ESV)

The righteous bring forth God’s wisdom, perverted speech about God’s wisdom will not be tolerated.

Proverbs 12:8

[8] A man is commended according to his good sense,
but one of twisted mind is despised. (ESV)

To not recognize godly wisdom is from the twisted mind and is to be despised. It is commendable to gain good sense from his wisdom.

Proverbs 15:2

[2] The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouths of fools pour out folly. (ESV)

Godly wisdom is not afraid of knowledge, in fact, it is to be commended, but when it breaks down in to silliness and folly we demonstrate our foolishness.

I like how Paul puts this into perspective.

Slide #5

Romans 11:33–36

[33] Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

[34] “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

[35] “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

[36] For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be
glory forever. Amen. (ESV)

It his for his Glory, that’s easy to forget when I think all things are about me.

Does that mean what we do or don’t do, doesn’t matter. NO! It does matter, God refines us and disciplines us. By his sovereignty there are circumstances placed in our way so that we increasingly depend on him. That is the miracle and lesson he wants to accomplish in us. Nihilism? No. You could seek that and not care, if you adopt this attitude maybe it is in his will to use you as an example of a fool. We are called to follow his commands, be holy because He is holy and to seek his righteousness not to make us better people but to abide in in Him and we have the privilege of enjoying his discipline, his wisdom to better understand his tender mercies and grace and a glimpse of what we will enjoy forever.

So how does this come about?

Slide #6

2. The tongue reveals our heart by how we display godly discipline.

Read Proverbs 16:3

We should seek self-discipline and respond humbly to being disciplined. Being constantly conformed to Christlike behavior and attitudes.

We learn self-discipline based on how we have been disciplined by our teacher

Slide #7

Proverbs 10:20

[20] The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;
the heart of the wicked is of little worth. (ESV)

Our righteous tongue will flow out of a properly aligned heart with God, and it is precious like choice silver. Cannot be done on our own accord, but will flow from a godly discipline.

Proverbs 15:4

[4] A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (ESV)

We can express truths about the tree of life, based on our discipline, perverseness is our own selfish desires and habits that break the spirit.

Slide #8

Proverbs 21:23

[23] Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself out of trouble. (ESV)

That seems to speak for itself.

Proverbs 28:23

[23] Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor
than he who flatters with his tongue. (ESV)

Our rebukes must be godly rebukes from right-heartedness and they often hurt in the moment. Flattery to just be agreeable is not a good virtue. We must speak truth in love and grace but recognize that it can hurt.

The writer of Hebrews, summarizes these themes nicely.

Slide #9

Hebrews 12:10–11

[10] For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. [11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (ESV)

In verse 10, the most important discipline is that that comes from God. And let us not forget it is to share in his holiness. The spanking hurts when we're children, but the fruit of peace we learn to honor our parents is far more important.

So how do we receive this godly discipline that is so important. Well we need to study his Word and seek him in prayer, gaining godly knowledge, humbly pursuing wisdom and character. The flip side of that is a lack of discipline, inevitably leads us to to not study the Word, spend MI less time in prayer and seek our needs over the needs of others. The failure to do so worsens our ability to become disciplined.

What must we admit and recognize to change this? It is important to seek and affirm truth.

Slide #10

3. The tongue reveals our heart by how we believe deceit about ourselves and God.

It is easy to simplify lying as bad and telling the truth as good. Certainly virtuous. Lying to your mother about stealing cookies or how the car was damaged or on our income tax returns are bad things and reflections of our sinful heart.

Read 16:8-

This verse would seem to indicate that we should not indulge in ill-gotten gain. And that little is better than much depending on how it was obtained. This would miss the greater point that righteousness is better than injustice in all circumstances and all situations.

But, perhaps the greatest lies we tell are about ourselves and about God.

Read 16:2

We have the tendency to think we're pretty good people. Our ways are pure by our own standards. We forget that we are to be judged by God's standards. Impossible to achieve and thankfully we can be fully reconciled to him by His grace through the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and his resurrection from the dead.

What does our heart believe is true? I know I'm mixing my metaphors of heart and mind. By the renewing of our mind, what does our heart really embrace?

Romans 12:2. [NO SLIDE]

[2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)

Man is prone to lie to himself about his sin and his position outside of Christ. Repenting of that and seeking God's goodness is how we can address the heart of self-righteousness.

To tell lies about God and do so unknowingly, can be devastating.

The nature of truth must be embraced and the consequences of lying cannot be underestimated.

Slide #11

Proverbs 12:19

[19] Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment. (ESV)

Truth is eternal, immutable, unchanging, lies are fleeting.

Proverbs 17:20

[20] A man of crooked heart does not discover good,
and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity. (ESV)

We cannot know goodness without a righteous heart.

Proverbs 26:28

[28] A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin. (ESV)

The destructiveness of lying and flattery can be misleading.

So how does one lie to himself? He says he is good. Read

Proverbs 16:2. The greatest sin is to believe ourselves as good.

Slide #12

1 John 1:8–10

[8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (ESV)

John is clear, to deny sin is a lie. The bible tells us no man is good. Until we can repent of our pride in this area we cannot understand the need for salvation by our gracious God.

That brings us to how we can lie about God and not recognize our need for God and how that is provided through Jesus. False teachers will deny this doctrine and tell us wrong things about God and about Jesus.

Slide #13

1 Timothy 6:3–5

[3] If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, [4] he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, [5] and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. (ESV)

So how do we learn sound doctrine and avoid following a “different” doctrine? By spending time in the Word, by listening to trustworthy teachers. Try to avoid being enticed to go down rabbit trails that are not productive and in fact are divisive.

But, it is easy to be distracted and we must recognize the realities of what we are warned about.

Slide #14

2 Timothy 4:3–4

[3] For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (ESV)

Sounds very contemporary, we would all probably agree that this is happening now.

If Paul were writing today, instead of myths, he might use the phrase “conspiracy theories” instead. Some truth mixed with misleading information, fleshly concerns and worldly concerns.

In trying times, people seek answers and often go to the Bible to interpret what is happening around them. This can be dangerous.

We should look at events around us through the prism of the Bible and not look at the Bible through the prism of events around us. We shouldn't see events occurring in our world and then go to the Bible and see if that lines up. If we properly understand end times and events from a biblical perspective then we can determine if the events we see are consistent with that. It may seem like a subtle difference but it is huge!

1970s and 80s. Ronald Reagan, USSR, Y2K.

But the most serious misinformation is what is said about Jesus. That is far more egregious and harmful. Here is what is concerning to me about teachers that read too much in to these events. Can we trust what they say about Jesus. Are they influenced by some new doctrine or a refreshing way to look at Jesus.

Paul has some pretty serious words about this.

Slide #15

Galatians 1:7–9

[7] ...but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
[8] But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. [9] As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. (ESV)

It's clear, there is one gospel of Christ and anything that provides new light or changes to what Jesus and Scripture teaches should be rejected.... Not just rejected but cursed.

Jesus had some pretty strong words about this.

Slide #16

Matthew 18:6

[6] but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (ESV)

We are warned there will be false prophets and false teachers. How do we recognize false prophets and false teachers? There are many things, first of all, they will not come in saying, I'm a false teacher. Mostly truth mixed with falsehood. Be aware of language that states I have a special word from God, or you need to sit under my teaching to understand the true gospel. That is how cults start. That is the genesis of Mormonism and Jehovah's witness' and many other false religions.

One of the key questions is what do they teach about Jesus? Is he really God? Did he really die? Was he really raised from the dead?. Minimizing the lordship and necessity of Jesus is a major red flag. We could do a whole study on false prophets and false teachers.

Well, how do we keep an eye. One of the role of elders is discerning this. Paul is addressing Titus and writes this after listing the qualifications of elders.

Slide #17

Titus 1:9

[9] He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (ESV)

That is ominous and we must take that seriously.

Slide #18

4. The tongue reveals our heart by how we stir up division in the Body

Read Proverbs 16: 4,5 and 7.

Discord in the church is a perennial problem. We are sinful men and women who struggle with our fleshly pride. Let's see how God feels about it.

Slide #19

Proverbs 6:16–19

- [16] There are six things that the LORD hates,
seven that are an abomination to him:
[17] haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,
[18] a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that make haste to run to evil,
[19] a false witness who breathes out lies,
and one who sows discord among brothers. (ESV)

I think the most destructive thing to a church body is gossip. Well, I don't gossip, we might say. OK, maybe you don't but have you listened to someone who is gossiping? Oh sure, we can dress it up in language of "I'm concerned about...". "Did you hear about so and so, we should pray for them" or the Southern comment that seems to absolve the gossipers guilt "Well, bless his heart".

Test: Have you ever drawn a conclusion about someone based on what someone else told you?

Gossip itself, may not be the worst part of the sin, but the damage it brings to our relationships with one another may be.

It's not just the tongue of gossip that is the problem. It's that the gossip is a reflection of our heart. Instead of just condemning gossip, maybe we should evaluate our heart when we are tempted to gossip or someone wants to gossip with us. Is it because of jealousy, having our feeling hurt, unrepentant sin. Are we looking at people through the eyes of God's grace, how he looks at us, or through our judgmental eyes.

Paul has some pretty tough language regarding how we create enmity and strife.

Slide #20

Galatians 5:19–21

[19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (ESV)

Enmity which is hostility toward someone, strife, jealousy, rivalries, dissensions, divisions. They're all there with those sins that many of us, maybe in our self-righteousness, can proudly say we avoid. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, drunkenness, orgies, they are all lumped together. We shouldn't fool ourselves. They are all signs of wickedness and the consequence are profound.

Paul also, has some interesting perspective on divisions in the church.

Slide #21

1 Corinthians 11:18–19

[18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. (ESV)

Paul is saying there must be factions (in part) to discern the genuine...that sounds crazy. But, it brings up the greater wisdom. We must seek truth in humility to bring about harmony.

Let's remember we are bound together in unity by the blood of Christ.

Slide #22

Ephesians 4:1–6

[1] I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one

baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (ESV)

Let's remember our new identity in Christ.

Slide #23

Galatians 3:26–28

[26] for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. [27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

We are taking on the identify of Christ, the new creations that we are, are bound together by Christ. There is no room for discord that leads to divisiveness.

Well, if I were to stop here, this could be discouraging and demoralizing. It would seem to be an ungracious scolding, a self-righteous finger wagging, an insensitive tongue lashing. Where is the message of mercy, of grace? Is God a god of only harsh judgement and wrath? Well he is and yet...he has some good news for us. He has some great news for us. We are not to just snap out of it and try harder. As believers, the same amazing grace that saved us works to sanctify us until we die or he returns. Our dying to self, presenting ourselves as living sacrifices allows him to do the work in us.

Because of his goodness, his holiness, he cannot countenance sin and rebellion and that is why he sent His Son. To “live with us” so that we can abide in Him. We have more than just a duty but a PRIVILEGE to declare his goodness and Glory!

Slide #24

5. The tongue reveals our heart by how we declare God's goodness.

Read 16:6.

We have the amazing ability and resources to declare his goodness, his love for us and ultimately it is for his glory. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The story of the Bible points to Christ. He is central to the theme of redemption. It is how the Holy Triune Godhead of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit condescended to man to reveal saving grace. It was not an after thought or a frustrated last ditch effort to save man. It was his ordained plan from the beginning, because he knows the heart of man and because of his goodness, his amazing grace, he has orchestrated all things.

What do we believe about the gospel of Jesus Christ at Temecula Hills? Let me be clear, we do not equivocate, we do not water it down and we will not compromise. Not to please man, not to be politically correct and certainly not to be popular.

What did Jesus say about himself? From his earliest recorded preached words, on the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" to the final words at his crucifixion "It is finished". The perfect bookends to summarize his earthly ministry, you must recognize how empty you are to become my disciple and I've done all the work. We believe his story of mercy, where we are redeemed entirely by his grace and not any human effort. We might say "I got nothing" or in board room vernacular, "I bring nothing to the table" and I can only respond in worship as an outpouring of my faith because of what you have done Jesus. His ministry of healing and teaching by parables constantly telling of God's pursuit of his people. A persistent expression of his mercy and grace for those he has called. Stories of him leaving the 99 to pursue the one. A wayward son who has a change in heart and returns to his father, who was standing, not with folded arms, but open arms to greet his son and had a feast to celebrate. Him assuring us that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. And for those that are struggling, comforting us in knowing that he will not snuff out the smoldering wick or crush the bruised reed. Stories of many who were healed by their mere faith in him. We are healed spiritually by our mere faith in him. We cannot earn it and we shouldn't try.

If I could summarize the gospel in two words it would be "Jesus Saves". We should not perform what Danny Akins calls "heretical math". Adding to or subtracting from or dividing it.

He took the bitter cup willingly. This cup that he asked the Father to remove. Essentially, is there any other way? It was not about the physical and emotional pain he would suffer during his floggings, mocking and brutal crucifixion that was bitter. It was him bearing the full weight of all man's sinfulness at that one moment of his death that he was asking, is there any other way? The only

salvation for man, was Christ's sacrificial death on the cross with all its agony, its crushing immeasurable anguish of his spirit that he knew he would have to endure. That was the bitter cup. And yet, when it was not removed from him, there is no other way...he went willingly, demonstrating his vast love for us that while we were yet sinners, he died for us. Truly stunning. But, it did not end there, the victory over death, sinful death was nullified by his resurrection. He is Risen! We can declare that every day of the year and every moment of our lives.

The gospel is simple but not simplistic. He reveals our poverty of spirit to us and we can only respond in worship and obedience. He has done all the work..."It is finished."

The gospel is radical but does not promote rebellion, it overcomes it. It is radical because a Holy God became our sin on our behalf and did so when we were sealed in our rebellion. And now we get to enjoy him forever!

The gospel is profound but not obscure. There is no secret code or special teaching to embrace its truth. It is from God revealed to us by his Holy Spirit and can only be received by what Jesus has done.

[Karl Barth]

Revelation 4:11. [NO SLIDE]

[11] "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created." (ESV)

He did and does it for His glory. Period.

Conclusion

So what is your heart today? I know I am in awe and can do nothing but repent of my shortcomings and faults. His kindness leads me to repentance.

Let's all examine our hearts and pray for godly wisdom in our speech. Let's pray that we faithfully declare the depths of his wisdom, that we embrace the discipline he has for us, that we seek truth and not be enticed by deceit, that we pray for

eagerness to maintain unity in his church and that we passionately seek to declare how good He is.

Let's pray.

It is powerful and we are powerless to His amazing grace.

It is powerful and we are powerless to His amazing grace.

Stunned by whom he has chosen, not to be confused with our value but ultimately for his glory.

We don't pursue holiness and his righteousness to prove anything, it flows out of the willingness to change our hearts and express his goodness. It is not used to prove our salvation but is a natural by-product. If we were to create a list of things we should and shouldn't do as Christians we would create a legalism that the Pharisees were chastised for.

Are you broken before a Holy God? Good. Now he can start using you.

The Garden is an example of God's perfect kingdom, man's rebellious pride caused the Fall and we are cursed. But not cursed without hope. In Genesis 3 after God curses man and woman and the serpent, he mentions the snake crusher. The one whose heel will only be bruised, a minor wound, as he vanquishes the evil that the snake represents. A flood that is not a failed effort to redeem mankind but an amazing story at the lengths God will go to to redeem his people. The covenant with Abraham that all the nations will be blessed, brought to fruition in Jesus. Egyptian slavery, a real life metaphor for the bondage of sin and a Holy God who saved his people literally by the blood of the Lamb. The Law of Moses instituted to help reveal our sinfulness when compared to a Holy God. The wanderings of the Israelites as they rebelled against God's goodness over and over and over. A delay of the Promised land because of persistent rebellion. A story of many kings and kingdoms that would rise and fall, a demonstration of the weakness of man and to point us to the one true king and his unfailing eternal kingdom. A poetic shepherd boy, David, who committed egregious acts, yet who in song and prose would tell of this glorious God whom he had a heart for and could not help but praise him for his salvation. Prophets that would describe in uncanny detail of this coming Messiah who would be crushed for our iniquity and striped for our transgressions and His eternal rule. The years of silence that preceded a scruffy character who would proclaim, repent "the kingdom of heaven" is at hand. The sayings and ministry of Jesus recorded by some unlikely characters, Matthew, a tax

collector not an honorable profession who clearly identified Jesus as the King of the Jews, Mark emphasizing the suffering servant Jesus not as the world conquering Messiah but as the sacrificial lamb. Luke, a Gentile, sharing the good news that the radical good news is for all mankind, not just the Jews. John, the beloved, telling us that Jesus is God and recording the words of Jesus that his kingdom is not of this world. The apostle Paul, a Jew of Jews, redeemed from persecuting Christians to become the quintessential missionary for Jesus.