

Profane Speech in Proverbs

I. Introduction

In 2007, the University of Arizona used electronic recorders to capture conversations from 396 participants, primarily college students. It found that men and women spoke roughly the same words per day, averaging about 16,000, and thus debunking the stereotype that women are significantly more talkative.

In 2025 the university conducted a larger follow-up study. It analyzed recordings from 2,197 participants across four countries, aged 10–94. It reported an overall average of 13,000 words per day. This drop in word count is most likely due to the increased use of social media. According to recent estimates, an average person might produce 500–1,500 words daily via digital communication (texts, emails, social media posts) and consume 60,000–100,000 words through digital media.

1. How do these studies reflect what you see in the culture today?
2. Where do you find that you use your words the most?

God, the omniscient creator of the universe, can keep track of every word you speak each day. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 that on the day of judgment “people will give an account for every careless word they speak.” This means that every day we have about 13,000 chances to sin with our tongue. Because the potential to sin with our tongue is so high we need wisdom in how we speak. The book of Proverbs gives us this wisdom by contrasting wise and unwise speech.

Lesson Objective - Today we will observe the way Proverbs describes the unwise speech of a fool so that we will see the consequences of profane speech.

II. Profane Speech in Proverbs

Lying Tongue

Proverbs 12:22 - Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Proverbs 6:16–19 - There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.

1. After reading these verses what are some observations of God's perspective on lying?

Bearing False Witness:

Proverbs 25:18 - A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.

Proverbs 24:28 - Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips.

Proverbs 19:28 - A worthless witness mocks at justice, and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.

2. How would Solomon have defined a "false witness"?
3. What does Solomon compare a false witness to?
4. When is it appropriate to be a witness against your neighbor?
5. Who is our neighbor?

6. What would be some examples of bearing false witness for us today?

Proverbs 19:5 - A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.

Proverbs 19:9 - A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish.

Proverbs 21:28 - A false witness will perish, but the word of a man who hears will endure.

7. According to Proverbs, what are the consequences of being a false witness?

Dishonest Gain:

Proverbs 21:6 - The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.

8. How can lying be a source of profit?

9. What is the general outcome for those who choose to gain treasure by lying?

Hypocritical Speech:

Proverbs 26:23 - Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.

Proverbs 26:24–26 - Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart; ²⁵when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart; ²⁶though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.

10. What are “fervent lips?”

11. How do these two proverbs support what Jesus says in Matthew 12:34? How does the mouth reflect the true condition of the heart when it seeks to disguise itself?

12. What are some examples of hypocritical speech?

The Folly of Lying:

Proverbs 17:20 - A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.

13. What is the outcome of habitual liars?

Gossiping Tongue

14. What is gossip?

The Appeal of Gossip:

Proverbs 18:8 - The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.

15. Why is gossip so attractive and appealing?

The Danger of Gossip:

Proverbs 16:28 - A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

Proverbs 13:2-3 - From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence. Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

16. What are some of the outcomes of gossip?

The Cure for Gossip:

Proverbs 25:9 - Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret,

Proverbs 20:19 - Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbler.

Proverbs 26:20 - For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

Proverbs 10:19 - When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

17. What principles do these proverbs give us to help curb our gossiping tongues?
18. How can we determine if talking about someone else is gossip or appropriate information others should have?
19. How can gossip be a temptation for those who are engaging in Biblical soul care?

Flattering Tongue

Proverbs 29:5 - A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

Proverbs 26:28 - A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

20. What is the difference between flattery and gossip?
21. According to these two verses, what is the general effect of flattery?
22. What is the appeal of flattery? Why do people choose to engage in it?

Boasting Tongue

The Cunning Nature of Boasting

Proverbs 25:14 - Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.

Proverbs 20:14 - “Bad, bad,” says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts.

23. In what way is boasting a cousin to lying?

24. What do people hope to gain by boasting?

The Corrective Action to Boasting

Proverbs 27:2 - Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

25. Instead of boasting about ourselves, or our achievements, what should we do?

26. What is the danger of listening to other people praising us?

Proverbs 27:21 - The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise.

27. How is a person's character tested when they receive praise from others?

28. What does a humble response to praise look like?

The Tongue of a Fool

Proverbs 18:6 - A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.

Proverbs 18:7 - A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.

Proverbs 10:18 - The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

29. What Godly qualities are lacking in the speech of a fool?

Proverbs 26:9 - Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Proverbs 17:7 - Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.

Proverbs 26:7 - Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

30. Why is wise speech wasted on a fool?

Cursing Tongue

Proverbs 20:20 - If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.

Proverbs 10:31–32 - The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.

31. To what type of person does these proverbs attribute cursing?

Quick Tongue

Proverbs 18:13 - If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

Proverbs 29:20 - Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 25:23 - The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks

32. When are we tempted to speak too quickly?

III. Conclusion

These Proverbs show us foolish ways we use our tongues and the consequences that come about when we do. God wants His children to be wise in the words they choose to speak each day. James tells us if we lack wisdom, we need only to ask for it with a sincere heart (James 1:5). So, this week pray that God would give you wisdom each day in how to use your 13,000 words in a way that glorifies God.