

**Proverbs 26 v. 23** points to a vulnerability we all face when listening to others' words: no matter how fervent they appear, they can, like a pottery glaze, hide something base underneath. Do you think there is any way to test words like you would evaluate a shiny piece of pottery?

Why does flattery threaten us in the same way that **Proverbs 29 v. 5** describes?

Why is flattery simple to offer? Why is flattery simple to accept?

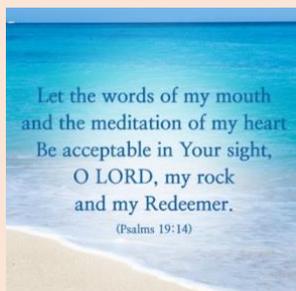
Thinking back over your previous answers, which is easier for you to produce – good words or bad words?

Something to do  
NOW OR LATER

**Avoiding the harm of bad words is impossible if we are a source of them ourselves. Pray as David did in Psalm 19 v. 14:**

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation  
of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight, O Lord,  
my Rock and my Redeemer.*

Like smog, bad words are difficult to escape when they're 'in the air' all around us. What can you do to reduce your exposure to such words in the coming weeks?



## Salendine Nook Baptist Church

Proverbs 6 v. 12 – 14; 16 v. 30;  
17 v. 4; 18 v. 8; 26 v. 23; 29 v. 5

### Wednesday Bible Study

For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using A Life Builder Bible Study. Our Theme for these studies is: **Proverbs (Learning To Live Wisely)**. The studies were originally written by William Mouser, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for both home study and Church study.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us.

If you will be doing the studies from home, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying. Hope that you enjoy it!

Pastor Ian

**CONTEXT:** There are 'how to' books on virtually every activity under the sun. We can pick up or polish any number of new skills that contributes to success in our careers, relationships or finances. But one book of the Bible – **PROVERBS** – specialises in real wisdom for all of life. Understanding it will give us direction that is practical, godly and shrewd, and will bless us richly.

## Some Thoughts To Help You While You Study

### The purpose of the study is to inoculate ourselves against the harmful consequences of foolish or evil speech.

It is dangerous to hear this kind of speech, for it makes the 'hearer' a collaborator. To receive such communication not only makes us look, it also makes us join and then share the hostility, if only for a moment, against the victim. After the first step of 'listening', it may be awkward or difficult to retreat, and the temptation to explore further what the pointer means may prove irresistible.

Of course, bad words are not magical; they have no power to transform your character as soon as you hear them. The verbs 'listen to' and 'pay attention to' suggest that when the hearer 'has an ear' for this kind of thing, it is correct to characterise such a person as wicked or a liar.

In this study the point not to miss is this: the attractiveness of gossip; its desirability; its power to please, to whet the appetite; to develop a taste for itself in its hearers.

Once consumed, such gossip is nearly impossible to dislodge. Even if we think it malicious, false or destructive, it remains with us as something to cope with.

Take note that words have great power to deceive, and if this fact hardens a listener's ear with cynicism, he or she may not only reject the evil that words can do but also the great good that wholesome, truthful words can bring. Those knowledgeable about ceramics can spot the cheap ones, even if they have pretty glaze. To spot the evil heart covered with fervent lips requires a similar discernment about people.

*Here is some space for you to think and take notes:*

## STUDY 5 – BAD WORDS

A childhood taunt says: *'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me'*. The sentiment may be brave, but we know from painful memory that words can hurt a lot. Solomon's Proverbs speak straightforwardly of the harm that can come from words alone. And yet for all their power to work evil, bad words can be surprisingly (and disconcertingly) pleasant to hear or to speak! What is worse, some of the most damaging words we hear may be ones never '**intended**' to attack us directly.

**PERSONAL REFLECTION:** *All of us can think of times we were harmed by malicious taunts. Can you think of a time when you were harmed by words that were not aimed at you in particular?*

The world is awash with bad words. The wise man and woman can spot them because they have characteristics that shrewd people can recognize. These Proverbs reveal what bad words are like and how they do their damage.

**Read Proverbs 6 v. 12 – 14; 16 v. 30; 17 v. 4; 18 v. 8; 26 v. 23; 29 v. 5**

### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

Evil communication can occur without a word being spoken. What are some of the ways this happens according to the Proverbs you just read? What other kinds of gestures do people use to communicate nonverbally?

Describe a time when you saw something like the nonverbal gestures mentioned in the Proverbs above. What did you think when you saw them?

What kind of danger do you encounter when someone communicates something to you in this way?

Suppose you hear an inflammatory report about someone else. By hearing it, do you show yourself to be wicked or a liar (**Proverbs 17 v. 4**)? Why or why not?

Imagine a plate of tasty morsels – elaborately decorated cookies, petit fours, canapes, hors d'oeuvres or something similar (**Proverbs 18 v. 8**). What do those choice morsels have in common with the words of a gossip?

Do you think there's any danger in '*innocently*' overhearing the bad words that come from evil lips and malicious tongues?