

## Proverbs Week #134 (13:2,3)

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*"From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence. The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." (Proverbs 13:2–3 NAS95)*

Wisdom often compares speech to food. She teaches about how sweet wisdom tastes in contrast to the bitterness of folly and reminds us to choose sweetness. When we eat food we chew, swallow, and then digest. The words of wisdom are like food. In order for our bodies to use them we need to ingest them. Last week I mentioned God's command to Joshua as he was going to enter the land. God told him to be strong and courageous. What would happen if Joshua didn't take these words seriously? What if he just didn't "eat them" and forgot what God told him? We read further in the first chapter of the book of Joshua that God also told him to meditate on the words of the Torah.

*"This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:8–9 ESV)*

How would he put the word of the Torah in his mouth? These verses tell us that he was to meditate on the Torah day and night. Joshua was to be strong and courageous and trust in the Lord. His strength would be maintained as he kept God's words in his mouth. I would like to suggest that we consider this as speaking the words of God and thinking about them in order to do them. Do you remember the good soil from the parable of the sower? Those who heard the word of God were like fruit trees that produced good fruit.

Putting God's words in our mouth also involves the way we speak. We have thousands of possible words we can choose at any given moment. Some suggest, the average child by age 5 knows over 2000 words and that number increases to over 40,000 by the time one finishes high school. With all the choices of possible words, how does one decide which words to speak or not to speak? Wisdom advises us to be very careful in the words we choose. Our Messiah also teaches on this subject.

*"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." (Matthew 12:33–35 NIV)*

If our speech was compared to a banana or an apple, what might it sound like if our fruit was rotten? Most people can tell the difference between fresh fruit and rotten. An apple that has been dropped a lot and an old banana turn brown and mushy. Wisdom directs us to be skilled in how we talk, too. Sometimes it isn't just the words we say but how we say them that make the difference. Others can benefit from our good words. Being careful to say the right words at the right time and in the right amount demonstrates that we have learned to be wise in our speech.

*"For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body." (1 Corinthians 12:14–20 ESV)*