**Communication in Proverbs**

By Gerard Feller

Proverbs 18:21 *Death and life are in the power of the tongue,* *and those who love it, will eat its fruit.*

**Introduction**

The book of Proverbs provides us with the application of the wisdom of God, who created the heavens and the earth, on the different aspects of life in this world of confusion and decline. In this Bible book, God defines us in regard to His immeasurable mercy, by applying His Wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life. He shows us with His insight what the consequences of all paths are, in which one could walk. To someone who is submitted to the Word, means are given to avoid the path of the own will and foolishness. The heart alone is unable to understand the scope of the many acts it instills in us. Proverbs defines us in regard to the Wisdom and Caution to protect us. In the book of Proverbs there are many lessons on communication to be found. It is a practical and poetical book. It’s not about ‘one-liners’, but about knowledge and wisdom from the Lord (Pro. 8:8-9). We should not forget that it is a component of the whole Scripture, of which Paul says that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and beneficial for teaching and training. Christ is the personification of the wisdom of God, as it can be read in Proverbs 8. God communicates by the Word (the Logos) and the Holy Spirit that writes the words in our hearts. Only when we have received this Spirit, can God fully communicate by the Word. In Proverbs 1:1-4 we see that He wants to teach us as a Father. According to Proverbs there is an intimate relationship between our heart and our speech. In Proverbs 6:14 this is worded with the saying “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks”. In Proverbs it is continually mentioned that we should keep the words in our hearts (Pro. 4:20-27). This means that the words should come from our innermost being, or more simply said: words that we believe. For that, we need to fill our innermost with the words of God, led by the Holy Spirit. After all, faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Pro. 16: 23 puts it as follows: *“The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips”.* The Proverbs of Solomon is not a book of ‘tips and tricks’ but communication that’s peppered with faith. Your words, spoken in silence addressed to yourself, to your heart and mind, or loudly spoken out to others, are the symptoms of the diagnosis of your heart. Not what goes into the mouth makes a person unclean, but things which come out of the person are what makes the person unclean.”

**1. There is power in our words!**

They can cause disunity or bring healing.

Pro.12: 18 – Some people are slapping around with hurtful words like a sword, but what the wise man does, does not hurt and is beneficial. Someone who speaks the truth will always stand; deception is just a temporary matter, for honesty is the best policy.

Words can cause damage or give life.

Pro. 11:9 – The hypocrite brings down his neighbor with his words, but the righteous do not allow themselves to be led astray by such a hypocrite.

Pro. 15:4 – Healthy words are like a tree of life; wrong words, however, cause damage.

**2. The source of our words is important**

They should be rooted in truth.

Pro. 6: 12 - A rascal and a bigot are easily recognized; you only need to hear what they say.

Pro. 6:14 – Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

They should not produce strife. Of course it doesn’t mean that one cannot have conflicts. They should not make the conflict worse.

Pro. 17:14 – Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate; so, don’t interfere, before you and others get involved in it.

Pro. 20:3 – It is an honor for a man if he avoids fights; only a fool interferes in disputes.

Pro. 26: 21 - Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious person to kindle strife.

**3. We should learn the ability of listening effectively**

Pro. 7:24 - Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, do not let your heart turn aside to her ways.

Pro. 8:33 - Listen to instruction and be wise, and do not neglect my teaching.

Pro. 20:12 - Ears that hear and eyes that see — the Lord has made them both.

Pro. 15:31 – One whose ear listens to a life-giving rebuke will stay among the wise.

Pro. 18: 13 - One who gives an answer before he hears, it is foolishness and shame to him.

Pro. 18:15 – One who is discerning desires to increase knowledge; he is very focused on wise words.

Pro. 15: 32 - One who neglects discipline rejects himself, but one who listens to a rebuke acquires understanding and wisdom.

Pro. 19:20 - Listen to advice and accept discipline, So that you may be wise the rest of your days.

**4. We are encouraged to think before we speak**

Pro. 16:32 – One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one who rules his spirit, than one who captures a city.

Pro. 21:23 - One who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.

Pro. 26:4 - Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, or you will also be like him.

Pro. 29:20 - Do you see a person who is hasty with his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Pro. 15:28 - The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

**5. It takes proper timing for our words**

Pro. 15:23 - A person has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!

Pro. 25:11 - Like apples of gold in settings of silver, is a word spoken at the proper time.

Pro. 21:23 - One who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.

Pro. 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

**6. We can also talk too much**

Pro. 10:12 - Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

Pro.11:13 - One who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, but one who is trustworthy conceals a matter.

Pro. 13:3 - One who guards his mouth protects his life. One who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Pro. 17:27, 28 - One who withholds his words has knowledge, and one who has a cool spirit is a person of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise. When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.

Pro. 18:2 – A fool does not delight in understanding, but in revealing his own mind.

Pro. 20:19 - One who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a gossip.

**7. The tone makes the music**

Pro. 17:9 - One who conceals an offense seeks love, but one who repeats a matter separates close friends.

Pro. 15: 1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The Lord helps us to answer with the right tone.

Pro. 16:1 - The plans of the heart belong to a person, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

Pro. 25:15 - Through patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks bone.

**8. Our communication must be in truth**

Pro. 12:17 - One who declares truth tells what is right, but a false witness, deceit.

Pro. 12:19 - Truthful lips will endure forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment, for honesty is the best policy.

Pro. 12:22 - Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.

Pro. 16:13 - Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and one who speaks right is loved.

Pro. 19:5 - A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who declares lies will not escape.

Pro 26:18 - Like a maniac who shoots flaming arrows, arrows, and death, so is a person who deceives his neighbor, and says, “Was I not joking?”

Pro. 19:5 - A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who declares lies will not escape.

**9. Seek good advisors/counselors** (Pro. 11:14, 15:22)

Pro. 24:6 - For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in an abundance of counselors there is victory.

Pro. 1:25 - And you neglected all my advice and did not want my rebuke;

Pro.1:30 - They did not accept my advice. They disdainfully rejected every rebuke from me.

Pro. 19:20 - Listen to advice and accept discipline, so that you may be wise the rest of your days.

Pro. 20:18 - Prepare plans by consultation, and make war by wise guidance.

Pro. 22:19, 20 - So that your trust may be in the Lord, I have taught you today, you indeed. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge?

Pro. 27:9 - Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and a person’s advice is sweet to his friend.

**10. Tell men what they should hear, not only what they desire to hear**

Pro. 29:5 - A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps.

Pro. 28:23 - One who rebukes a person will afterward find more favor than one who flatters with the tongue.

Pro. 27:6 - Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Pro. 14:25 - A truthful witness saves lives, but one who declares lies is deceitful.

Pro. 9:8 - Do not rebuke a scoffer, or he will hate you; Rebuke a wise person and he will love you.

**11. Use edifying constructive words**

Pro 15:4 - A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.

Pro. 16:24 - Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Pro. 12:25 - Anxiety in a person’s heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.

**12. Watch out for ‘sinful’ anger**

Pro. 29:11 - A fool always loses his temper, but a wise person holds it back.

Pro. 26:26 - Though his hatred covers itself with deception, his wickedness will be revealed in the assembly.

Pro. 8:13 - The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate.

Pro. 17:19 - One who loves wrongdoing loves strife; one who makes his doorway high seeks destruction.

Pro. 14:17 - A quick-tempered person acts foolishly, and a person of evil devices is hated.

**13. Don’t look for revenge**

Pro. 20: 22 - Do not say, “I will repay evil”; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.

**14. Be humble**

Pro. 14:21 - One who despises his neighbor sins, but one who is gracious to the poor is blessed.

Pro. 16:19 - It is better to be humble in spirit with the needy than to divide the spoils with the proud.

Pro. 29:23 - A person’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor.

**15. Be in reverence of the Lord (Consider God)**

Pro. 3:7 - Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

Pro. 13:13 - One who despises the word will do badly, but one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.

Pro. 24:21 - My son, fear the Lord and the king; Do not get involved with those of high rank.

Pro. 28:14 - How blessed is the person who fears always, But one who hardens his heart will fall into disaster.

Pro. 31:30 - Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

**16. Be honest about your mistakes and/or sins.**

Avoid self-righteousness and acknowledge that you make mistakes.

Pro. 14:9 - Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is goodwill.

**Things that God hates (that He finds an abomination) in Proverbs**

Violent men (Pro. 3:31)
Pride, lying, killing, intriguing, love for doing evil, a false witness, causing dissension (Pro. 6:6-19)

Those who are unfaithful (Pro. 12:22)

The sacrifice of the wicked (Pro. 15:9)

The thoughts of the wicked (Pro. 15:26)

Those who are proud (Pro. 16:5)

Those who judge unjustly (Pro.17:15)

The way of the wicked (Pro.15:9)

Gifts to bribe or to corrupt (Pro. 15:27)

A false balance, thus deceit in business (Pro.11:1; 16:11; 20:10)

Unjust gain (Pro.1:19)

From: Het Leven, praktische lessen uit het Boek (Life, practical lessons from the Book), Jongbloed Heerenveen, 2001

**Contradictions in communication in the**

Knowledge (of the Lord) versus ignorance

Wisdom versus foolishness

Clarity versus ambiguity

Truth versus Lies and gossip

Understanding versus Lack of understanding

Trust versus Suspicion

Freedom versus Bondage

Growth versus Stagnation

Maturity versus Immaturity

Uniformity versus Contention, antagonism

Unity versus Division

Proximity versus Separation

Intimacy versus Distance

Brotherhood versus Hostility

Fellowship versus Despise

Pro. 18:21 - Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it, will eat its fruit.

**Summary of the principles from Proverbs: obstacles and keys for a good communication in (marital) relationships (**unknown source**).**

Key verses in Proverbs are:

Pro.1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge, the fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Pro .9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

**Obstacles:**

A. Materialism

\* If we find material matters more important than God, it will harm our marriage.

\* Our relationship with God influences our relationship with our spouse. If we only think of material things, we exclude God.

\* Material things are not the only form of love, and it does not substitute it. You can’t buy love.

\* We should attach greater value to speaking the truth than expressing love to our relationship with material things.

B. A critical attitude

\* A great obstacle in the communication with the other person is that we quickly have the tendency to measure or judge/condemn the other person.

\* Just like with everything, we should judge righteously.

C. Fear

\* If there’s a lot of prejudice, we are afraid to open up ourselves to the other person.

\* If our spouse finds it difficult to deal with a correction, then it’s difficult to open up ourselves to the other.

D. Manipulation

\* Whining, sulking, intimidating or drawing yourself back in order to get attention or have your way.

\* Nobody loves to be manipulated and it only cultivates resistance and mistrust.

E. Obsessiveness

\* We live in a busy world, and we do not prioritize the important matters.

\* Our spouses should know that they have our attention.

F. Numbed

\* Sometimes our marriage and our relationships become a rut.

\* Nothing changes, from our speech, our food, our clothing to the place where we are going to.

\* Happy relationships/couples seek new things that they can do together.

G. Dishonesty

\* This destroys our marriages.

\* The trust that should be there, is thwarted, even the smallest lies are recognized.

**Keys to an effective communication**

A. Be familiar to the other.

\* Know the preferences of the other person.

\* This is only possible if you spend time together.

B. Be loving and merciful.

\* We should not pay evil with evil.

\* We should love the other unconditionally, even if your spouse does not.

C. Be transparent

\* If you want your spouse to love you intensely, you should open yourself to him.

\* There is no place for something that the other doesn’t know.

D. Be trustworthy

E. Be positive; if there is something insignificant, just don’t mention it.

F. Be sensitive

\* If we don’t experience it that way ourselves, it doesn’t mean that the other person experiences it the same way.

\* We should accept the feelings of the other, and help him/her with it.

G. Be effectively communicative. Pay attention to the (non)-verbal signals of the other; sometimes it means something different from what is said. (See the article on (Lichaamstaal) body language of the Lord Jesus on the Promise website)

H. Be careful in listening.

\* On many scriptural places it is stated that Jesus says: “He who has ears, should hear”.

\* Don’t jump to conclusions, but listen first to everything.

I. Be bountiful in prayer

\* It is difficult to quarrel with someone you’re praying for.

\* We come to rest during prayer and recall how we should approach our spouse.

**How should we deal with conflicts in the right way?**

A. Be clear on what it’s all about, what the main thing is.

\* Let it be clear what you’re discussing about.

\* We often quarrel about several things.

B. Repeat the words of the other.

\* You often hear in a discussion: That’s not what I say or mean.

\* We must make an effort to ascertain exactly what the other person means and what his/her intentions are.

C. Choose the right time

\* Don’t use arguments as ammunition at your own convenience.

\* Just before bedtime is usually not the best moment.

D. Think before you start speaking.

\* Consider whether a discussion on this subject will produce anything of value.

Pro. 17:14 - Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate,

E. Try to resolve something.

\* If you get angry, don’t sin!

F. Attack the problem, not your spouse.

\* Make a distinction between the behavior and the person.

G. Sometimes it is good to hold each other during a discussion.

\* Don’t let anything go that you haven’t prayed for together.

Gerard Feller, August 2012

Translated by Ursula Moestapa

The Proverbs have been taken from different translations. The translations of Proverbs differ somewhat from each other. That’s because it’s about small phrases where the larger context is missing.

Category: [**Bijbelstudie: geestelijke kennis**](https://stichting-promise.nl/categorieen/22-bijbelstudie-geestelijke-kennis) (Bible Study: spiritual knowledge)