

Misguided Counsel

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Date: 29 June 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Well, there is something that all of you do every single day that will either lead to something! that is very dangerous, invite people to something that is very dangerous, or invite them to something! that is life-giving and full of health. Something every single one in this room does every single day that either leads people up to the precipice of danger or helps to bolster them and provide health.

What is that? You speak. You speak words. Words have the power of life or death. We find that from Solomon, the wise king, who says in Proverbs chapter 18 verse 21, he says, death and life are in the power of the tongue and those who love it will eat its fruit. Do you have any appreciation for the fact that your words have power potential? The power of potential for either things that will lead to death, the danger of what you will say, or things that will lead to life through the words that you say.

To the extent that Solomon will also say this in Proverbs 25 verse 11, he says, a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Think of the incredible opportunity, the advantage that you have to speak and to invite others to participate in life in that way.

The potential of your words every single day and the opportunity that you have to invite people to enjoy health and life and well-being through your words. But the opposite is also true and the incredible responsibility and the gravity of that pressure that I don't think that we often recognize or understand.

The pressure and responsibility of words that also have the potential of passing on death. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Recently, the teens who were part of the missions team went through the book called *The Power of Words and the Wonder of God*. It's edited by John Piper, but it has kind of a collaborative work and several authors who contribute to this. And in the first chapter, Paul Tripp says this, he says, you have never spoken a neutral word in your life. You have never spoken a neutral word in your life. Your words have direction to them. If your words are moving in the life direction, they will be words of encouragement, hope, love, peace, unity, instruction, wisdom, and correction.

[3 : 0 5] But if your words are moving in the death direction, they will be words of anger, malice, slander, jealousy, gossip, division, contempt, violence, judgment, and condemnation. Your words have direction to them.

You have never spoken a neutral word in your life. Think about that. Think about that even now as you consider the time that when you leave this place and the conversations that perhaps are already playing in your head or those people that you need to give them the where to for and tell them how it is. Think about the power and potential of words. The significance that your words are never neutral. They always have direction.

And so this morning, this morning, we're going to, we're going to jump back into the book of Job and we're going to kind of learn from the example I trust and see the example of Job's three friends, Eliphaz, build that in Zophar. And, and there are, there are eight times where they speak, I think 12 chapters in which they speak them. So we're going to try to consolidate all those chapters as we can in this message. But, but really as we look at Eliphaz and his speech or his counsel that we get from chapters four and five, it really provides a good summary of the repeated instruction or repeated counsel that's coming from these three friends. One of the keys to understanding the book of Job and one of the things that all of us need to understand as we're working our way through is that Satan is the mastermind behind everything that we read from chapter one, all the way to chapter 37. Finally, God will speak in chapter 38. And finally we get a word from God. But up to this point, Satan is the mastermind behind all the counsel, behind all the feelings, behind all the trouble that's taking place. And we saw that especially in chapter one as Satan is instrumental in, in kind of

concealing or kind of deceiving Job into thinking that God was behind all the tragedy. You know, a fire from God falls from heaven. The four corners of the house are struck by a wind. That was a kind of a divine wind as it were. The, the orchestrated attack of, of two nations at one coming from the south and one coming from the north. There wasn't any other explanation than, that something supernatural made this happen. And then the supernatural disease that Job was subjected to. These oozing sores, these blackened flesh falling from his body. And then the, the worms that were crawling out of his wounds and the swollen face and all that happens to Job causes this response that we saw last week where Job is, is, is, is lifting up his heart in anguish and says, let the day perish on which I was born. And the night that said, a man is conceived. Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? And you can hear and feel this heart of anguish, these raw emotions. And, and, and it raised the question for us, is, is, is Job starting to lose it? This, this integrity that we saw through, throughout the first couple of chapters is now, is now, is now he hitting, is he hitting his breaking point? Where now the, the fractures of his integrity are beginning to show.

And we saw last week that, that, that while this was raw emotion that Job is expressing, we got to take a look at the fact that, that emotion is good. Emotion is really a gift from God. And, and by the way, God, God, in making us emotional creatures, we, we are thus made in the image of God by, by having emotion.

[7 : 05] We saw that in the life of Jesus, by the way, right? He was, he was moved by compassion. He was moved with pity. He weeps there at the tomb of Lazarus with Mary and Martha, just moments before he heals and raises Lazarus from the dead. Why did he weep? He knew it was coming. Well, because he demonstrated a heart that was full of emotion, full of empathy, full of consideration for those who were struggling.

And he models for us what we know in the scriptures to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those weep. You see, we show the image of God. We show the heart of God. We, we reflect the image of God through godly emotions. And so emotions aren't meant to, to sever our relationship with God. They're, they're not meant to tamp down so that we never have emotions. No, the, the opposite of bad emotions isn't no emotion at all, but it's to steer and guide those, those emotions to God, entrust those emotions to him and to allow him to stabilize our hearts and to, to help to settle us through those difficult emotions and to lead us to faith. Emotions are good. But here, but here Job is after seven days of sitting with his friends. Now he has kind of broken the silence as it were, and now the floodgates are going to open. And Satan, by the way, is not going to let up. God has given Satan unrestricted access to Job's life. And he's allowed to, to torment Job up to the brink of death, all the way up to the point where he's going to die. And so we have to understand that what we see and what we're going to experience in this book and through this counsel is the counsel that is coming through the mastermind of the enemy. Curse God and die. That's his objective. So we come to chapter four and we begin our time together with let the counsel begin. You can almost hear, start your engines. Here we go.

Let me read for us verses one to six as we begin our study together. If you're joining us, maybe for the first time or you are a repeat guest with us and you don't have a Bible, the Bible in the pew ahead of you, that is now our gift to you. Please take it home with you if you don't have one. But turn with me, if you would, to Job chapter four. It's on page 418. Let me read. It says this, or then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, if one ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? Yet who can keep from speaking?

Behold, you have instructed many. You have strengthened the weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling. You have made firm the feeble knees. But now it has come to you and you are impatient.

It touches you and you are dismayed. Is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope?

[10 : 26] The counsel will begin with Eliphaz, likely because he is the oldest of the three. And by the way, at the very end, God addresses Eliphaz first and then lumps the other friends in along with him. So he's probably the oldest.

He's considered probably the wisest. He speaks first. And his first accusation to Job is, practice what you preach. And by the way, the titles that I'll use are a little provocative and that's by design because I want you to kind of feel the weight of what's going on here. So you're like, what did he just say?

That was the accusation. Practice what you preach. Now, initially, as you read the first couple of verses, maybe you're kind of hearing a commendation. They seem so gentle and supportive and affirming.

In verse 3, you've strengthened the many. Excuse me, you've instructed many. You've strengthened the weak. Your words have upheld the stumbling. You have made firm the feeble knees. And then all of a sudden, boom, punchline. Here it comes. Verse 5, now it's your turn, Job. Job, follow your own counsel.

Practice what you preach. Follow your own advice. Live up to your own words. Receive what you dish out. Are you the kind of person who's going to be willing to receive instruction or are you going to push it away? For me, as I hear this and read this, it seems like somewhat of a manipulation tactic. He's kind of painted Job into a box. Do you see it? Like, if you resist, it's going to show that you have a stubborn, impatient, hard heart. You're not the kind of guy that you claim to be. Like, you can dish it out, but you can't receive it. So he kind of paints Job into a box. Will you listen to others as you have expected them to listen to you? Now, immediately as we evaluate the words of his friend Eliphaz, they're strong.

[12 : 32] And we see these opening words that seem to be so direct and so brutal. Instead of assuming the best about Job, we find this person, this man, who's already jumping to conclusions. He's already made some assumptions about Job's character. He calls him in verse 5. He says, are you going to be impatient?

Which is the word to be weary. The word to not have capacity to carry something out. This person who's unable to see it through. In other words, Job, if you're so confident, then you would be a person who's willing to receive instruction just like you've been willing to give it up. And then in verse 6, notice this. He says this, is not your fear of God your confidence?

In the integrity of your ways, your hope? In other words, Job, if you're so confident of your fear of God and your integrity, then what just happened in chapter 3 where the bottom has come out? Where your expressions of hopelessness have come right out into the open?

Like, what's going on here, Job? Maybe to put it another way, Job, if you're so convinced of your integrity, then number one, why are you so hopeless? And number two, why has this happened to you? Why has this taken place? You see, Eliphaz's theology, we're going to see, is true in some places, but he takes that truth and he makes the wrong assumptions. He makes the wrong correlations. He's not faithful in the way that he applies the truths that he knows to be true about God. You say you fear God. Well, then this should not be true about you, Job. You should not be a person who's demonstrated hopelessness in your situation. But then he turns in verse 7. You thought that was bad. Now in verse 7, it gets worse. You are getting what you deserve, Job. That's what he says. You're getting what you deserve. Notice this with me. Remember who, excuse me, remember who that was innocent ever perished. Or where were the upright cut off?

[14 : 58] As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same. By the breath of God, they perish. And by the blast of his anger, they are consumed.

You see what he's doing here? Job, you are getting exactly what you deserve. Job, you have sown a certain spirit, a certain wickedness. And so what you are experiencing is the harvest of all of those bad things that you've been planting. And the aggressive nature, the brutal nature of these words. We maybe stand back like, wow, what a jerk. And yet, maybe as you evaluate your own words in your own counsel that you have shared with others, you might say, oh, well, you know what?

Maybe, maybe I've done that too. Maybe my words have been words that didn't understand, didn't demonstrate sympathy, weren't the kinds of words that sought to demonstrate compassion or consideration or consideration or tenderness. I've jumped to conclusions. I've made very direct and bold and brutal statements. Oh, yeah. By the way, I guess that's me.

He's saying, Eliphaz, you reap what you sow. You plow iniquity and then you sow trouble. Are you surprised, Job? Of course, that's what happens.

This is all your own doing. You are deceived. And you insist that those who are around you reinforce your integrity. But the truth is, all you have to do is draw a straight line between the consequences and the results of your life. And it will draw a straight line to the trouble that you've caused yourself. Is not God in control? Is God not just? As he says in verse 9, by the breath of God they perish and by the blast of his anger they are consumed. God is in control and God is just. Thus, what's happening to you is justice because nothing is out of God's control.

That's the implication. So what will we say about this counsel? If you're observing this situation and you hear this going down and you're kind of an observer on the side, how do you respond to this? What's wrong about this?

[17:46] Well, I want to spend just a few moments as we're making our way through this text to apply this to us and to learn the lessons from what is taking place here. First, I want to encourage anyone who doesn't have this book, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand. I'm going to show you a picture of it that you get this book. Now we have lots of copies in the resource center and I just want to encourage you to pick it up because Paul Tripp will help us understand or help you understand that everyone in this room is a counselor. Everyone in this room speaks either words of life or words of death.

Everybody in this room gives advice and maybe if I put it in that frame, you can kind of grasp what I'm talking about. Maybe even when you leave here today, you're going to give some advice and it may not even be advice that is invited. It may be unsolicited advice, but we give advice and so how do we do this in a way that is consistent with the scripture and happens in a way that invites people to experience God?

First, we recognize that Eliphaz's advice is not gentle. He is not gentle. It lacks gentleness, right? And so that should be our first clue, right? Our first clue that this advice is not from God. And I say that because we know the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You're like, wait a second, that's a New Testament verse and we're in the Old Testament and I say God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so if we're reflecting the character of God and we represent God, we're going to be speaking to one another in this way. Whether you're in the Old or New Testament, it lacks gentleness. He hasn't given Job the benefit of the doubt. There's no tenderness, no sympathy. There's no desire to understand.

[19:51] There's nothing about gentleness in these words at all. And we find some instruction in Galatians chapter 6 where it says, brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Now, let me just pause right there. This, by the way, is somebody who is, in fact, sinning and yet your response even to a sinning brother is to restore them in gentleness.

Eliphaz doesn't know the first thing about Job's situation. And Job, as far as he's concerned, could be guilt-free. God calls him blameless. Now, it doesn't mean he's perfect. But here he is and he's already jumping to conclusions based upon what he believes is true about God. He is not gentle. Second, he lacks humility. He's not only lacking in the category of gentleness, he's lacking in the quality of humility. Notice the verse in Galatians continues. It says, brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. And then this, keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. You're not above temptation. But for the grace of God, you would be the same. And then he goes on, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Stop being so cocky. Stop thinking that you have your life together. Stop coming across as if your life is in a place that is above reproach. And stop passing judgment when you haven't first evaluated your own heart, that you take the log out of your own eye, and then you approach this individual, whoever they are, with a spirit of humility and gentleness. That's what we're called to do. Eliphaz showed his ignorance of God's truth. He misapplied God's truth. And of course, we understand that humility and gentleness help to inform our love, right? And so Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 13, 1, he says, if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. It doesn't matter how eloquent you are. It doesn't matter how skilled with words you are.

It doesn't matter how convincing you might be. If your words are not accompanied by love, they will have no effect on the people you're speaking to. So we've just begun and here we are just learning lessons about Eliphaz. And now he turns the corner in verses 12 to 16.

And now he will begin to point to the source of his revelation. Notice this. He says, I heard a word from God. That's the implication. I heard a word from God. And by the way, back in that time, the word of God came in visions. The word of God came secretly and often at night.

[23:11] It came individually. And this is his claim. His claim is, I heard a word from God. Listen. Now a word was brought to me stealthily. My ear received the whisper of it amid thoughts from visions of the night when deep sleep falls on men. Dread came upon me in trembling, which made

all my bones shake. A spirit glided past my face and the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes. There was silence. And then I heard a voice.

And then he's going to share what that voice said. I heard a word from the Lord. I heard a word from God. And by the way, anyone who tells you they heard a word from God that is not anchored in the scripture, beware. Beware. God has, by the way, already spoken from his word. And his word, by the way, is sufficient. His word for us is the full revelation of what he wants. And he promises that his word, by the way, in 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 3, that his word is what is able to be sufficient for all of life in godliness. God has given us everything that we need that pertains to life in godliness through his word. You can trust it. You don't have to listen to those people who say, hey, I heard a word from God. This is what you need to know. Unless they take you to the scriptures.

Notice the descriptions that he gives. A word was brought stealthily. A vision of the night. Dread came upon me. Trembling. A spirit glided past my face. The hair of the back of my neck stood up. Interestingly, this word form that he uses is the same word that's used repeatedly throughout the Old Testament to describe a false representation of God. Here's an example. Just briefly, Exodus chapter 20 verse 3 says, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness or form, that's the word we see in our passage, of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. And it goes on in Deuteronomy chapter 4. We don't have time for that. But repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, this form is an inaccurate representation of God. So even in this, Satan is intending to deceive. About a week and a half ago, we had a repairman come to the church to do some work. And I was talking about the series that we were in in the book of Job. And I said, you know, in a couple of weeks, I'm going to be sharing about this vision that one of Job's friends had. And by the way, it was clear to me that this repairman had not been in church and knew nothing about the book of Job. And I described kind of what it says here, you know, that a stealthy word, trembling, glided past him in the night. He's like, well, I know who that is. That's pretty clear to me. I know exactly who we're talking about. And I think it's true.

I don't believe this is a word from the Lord. And the reason I say that is because of what we find in the end of the book in chapter 42. God will give his assessment. He says, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, notice he's the forefront of these friends, my anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has. This was not a word from the Lord. And we're going to see the characteristics of this word that he will share and how it has all the hallmarks of the word that is used by Satan, our adversary. You have misrepresented me, God says. You have sinned against me and against Job. Now, I think Eliphaz and his buddies are really friends of Job. I really believe that to be true. And I really believe that they have good motives. And I would like to believe that the reason why Eliphaz is so direct is because he's like, Job, this is hard. And all you have to do to get over all of this stuff is just recognize your sin and confess it to God. And you could be done with all this. I'd like to give him the benefit of the doubt, but he was not speaking for God.

[27 : 53] We see this next lesson, lesson three. You see, Eliphaz was speaking for himself, not for God. He was speaking for himself. In this book, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand, that I've just encouraged you to pick up. Paul Tripp says this. He says, personal ministry is about bringing people to the word of God and giving them the truth that God has therein. Yet, and here's, this is interesting, we usually approach informal conversations with our neighbors and friends much more casually than we do formal public ministry. If you were asked to teach a Sunday school lesson, to preach a sermon, or to lead a Bible study, you would immediately ask yourself, do I have the time to prepare? Yet, as we often respond to personal ministry or sharing advice with little preparation, reflection, or prayer. The ministry of the word, we give the word one-on-one, done in person, personally, with others. The word of God that is supposed to be shared in advice, we give no consideration for the weightiness of those words.

The life or death is in the power of the tongue. We forget that God uses those interactions to apply the transforming power of scripture to people's hearts. We forget that God's word is our primary tool of change. Instead, we come up with little personal wisdom and personal experience, and we let the words fly, end quote. Isn't that so true? How unmeasured and unprepared we tend to be when we're giving advice to people about weighty things or superficial things, and we seem to be speaking with authority, but unless we're speaking the words of God, our words will carry little, if

any, positive impact. What if we were to take our counsel seriously? What if we were to understand the gravity of the words that we share? What if we studied the words and prayed about the advice we were to give? That's one of the things, by the way, and I'm going to call out Pastor Knoyer, and he's not going to appreciate this, but one of the things I've appreciated about his example is so often when we're in a conversation about stuff that's going on, instead of just letting the words fly, how often he says, well, tell you what, let me pray about this. There's wisdom. Pastor, there is wisdom in what you do. Thank you for setting that example, and we can learn from that wisdom. We can learn from that example instead of just letting the words fly without giving it any heed. Next, we come to verses 17 to 21, and this is the accusation. God is too pure to put up with you, Job. God is too pure to put up with you. Verse 17, he says, can mortal man be right before God?

Can a man be pure before his maker? Let me just pause there for a moment. Is that true? Is it true? Yeah, it's true. That's not a trick question. Yes, it's true, okay? But he'll move on. He says, even in his servants he puts no trust. In his angels he charges with error.

[31 : 39] Satan, of course, is the forefront of that. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed like the moth. Between morning and evening, they are beaten to pieces. They perish forever without anyone regarding it. It's not their ten cord, or is not their ten cord plucked up within them? Do they not die in that without wisdom?

I want you to recognize that throughout the course of the counsel that is given, how many times Bildad and Eliphaz and Zophar will speak truth about God and yet apply it in the wrong way. Notice this truth. God is perfect. No one can stand before him. God is eternal, and men are temporary. God is high and exalted. Men are low. Of course, all of those things are true. And so now what he begins to do is he makes this correlation in his mind is, since God is these things, then that means this must be true of your life. How often we do the same thing? How often has our culture done the same thing? I'm thinking about a sign. We just passed it again the other day on our walk. Love is love.

Well, I'm sorry. Love is not love. It's not what you perceive to be love. Love is very specific. Love is very defined. Love is perfect. Love is kind. Love, and the New King James, love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, meaning it's not proud. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. There is a very clear definition of love that we find in Scripture. And of course, God is love. And we just look at God, and we're like, no, this is what love looks like. I just look at God. It's not ambiguous. It's not nebulous. It's not just out in the air.

It's not just subjective to how you feel. No, love is very defined. And how many times have we taken truth about God? Well, if God is loving, then God would not allow this. So you must not be good with God.

[33 : 53] And I'm sure a lot of us have felt that way. This is a repeated problem from each of the counselors. They defend God's justice. They're defending God's wisdom. They're defending God's purity. And we don't have time to go through these. They defend God's sovereignty. All of these massive truths. And they bring them to bear, and they weaponize them against Job. They take truths about God, and they weaponize them against Job. If God is this way, if God is in control, and God is good, and God is perfect, well, obviously, He's in control of this situation. And you must be experiencing the devastating consequences of your sin because you must be sinning against God. There's no other, in their minds, there was no other reason for it. So anyone who acts foolishly and wickedly in their counsel will experience God's judgment. I love how the psalmist puts this. Because what Eliphaz is trying to draw out is, is Job, when are you actually going to come to the place of realizing that before God, you're nothing?

You're just like this moth. You're just living in a house of clay. You're just temporary. You don't really matter to God. He doesn't really care about you or need you. But the psalmist says this, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man, that you're mindful of him and the son of man, that you care for him, yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet. God did that. Of course, it's an expression of his mercy. We don't deserve any of that. But God has condescended to us in allowing us to participate in showing the image of God and the glory of God to the world.

And he's done that through letting us participate in exercising dominion over the world. He's allowed us to participate in that, in serving some level of stewardship and authority that is representative of God himself. It's amazing to think about. It's a gift from him. Finally, in chapter 5, verses 1 to 27, and we'll do this quickly, the summary of this that Eliphaz is really getting to is, so repent already. Will you just repent already? Will you just acknowledge your sin? Will you just confess it to God? Then move on, Job, and everything will be better. That's the implication. In verse 8, he says, As for me, I would seek God. And to God, I would commit my cause, as though Job wasn't already doing this.

[37 : 06] He does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. He gives rain on the earth and sends waters on the fields. He sets on high those who are lowly and those who mourn are lifted to safety. Job, just recognize your sin and God will make it all better. That's the word. That's the word from Eliphaz.

It's not a true word. It's true that God does these things, but it didn't apply to Job's specific situation. Basically, he says, you are guilty, Job. You have been caught. Just confess your sin, and everything will be better. Then in verse 12, he says, he frustrates the devices of the crafty, so their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their own craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. But he saves, now jumping to verse 15, he saves the needy from the sword of their mouth and the hand of the mighty. So the poor have hope, and the injustice shuts her mouth.

Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves. Therefore, despise not the discipline of the Almighty. By the way, that is so true that the writer to the Hebrews uses the same phraseology in Hebrews chapter 12. And yet, he jumps to the wrong conclusions about Job. Notice in verse 20, in famine, he'll redeem you from death. In war, from the power of the sword, you shall be hidden from the lash of the tongue. That's what's happening right here, by the way. You shall not fear destruction when it comes. At destruction and famine, you shall laugh. You shall not fear the beast of the earth.

And then dropping down to verse 24, you shall know that your tent is at peace. The house is not going to fall down by the winds that want to push it over. Verse 24, I'm sorry, and you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing. No one's going to steal your stuff. Then verse 25, you shall know also that your offspring shall be many. They're not going to die in a tragic disaster. You shall come to the grave in a ripe old age like a sheaf gathered up in its season. Great encouraging words? No, because they're not true.

He couldn't have missed the mark any more than he did. He totally misunderstood the situation. And so, he doesn't become a counselor that leads to life, but a counselor whose words point to death.

[39 : 43] God, he says, would have remained right and pure and righteous. Just confess to him and everything will be better. All of this tragedy will go away. And as hard as this first speech is to hear, it gets worse as we continue. And I would just encourage you, I would encourage you, if you want to go deeper in this study, I want to encourage you to grab a study guide because we can't cover 12 chapters in 30 minutes and we just can't do it. And if you want to really press in and enjoy what we have to offer here in this study, I would just, I would encourage you to pick up a study guide. And also to participate in the Connect Group. The discussion that's happening there will also help to fill out some more of your understanding and give you a chance to ask questions. But let me just finish with this. Let me just remind us of some of the lessons that we've learned. Your words are not neutral.

Your words have potential. Life potential or death potential. And the way that we seek to steer our words is we do that through gentleness. We do that through humility. We do that by speaking for God.

And how do you speak for God? You speak for God by knowing what the Word of God says. And by the way, knowing how to apply it rightly to the situation. You need the Lord's help for that. You need the Holy Spirit to inform you. You need to be able to ask good questions and take good time and take it to the Lord and ask Him for help through the process so you can be the kind of counselor that will give life. Oh may God help us to give life to those around us through our words. Your words have life potential.

Let me close this in prayer. And then before you leave, I just want to draw attention to one more thing. God, thank you that you have given us the joy of being image bearers of you by speaking.

The very first words that we see in the scripture is, and God said, let there be light. God spoke. And so as reflections of your image, you've given us the joy of also speaking words.

[42 : 18] Lord, help us to understand the seriousness of that job. Help us to understand that we reflect you appropriately by leading people to life and speaking the words of life, the Word of God itself.

Help us to be faithful. Help us to speak those words to our own heart as we're in the Word of God. And may the words that we give be like what Solomon says, like apples of gold in settings of silver. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I want to invite, can the lighting stand up and the faucet? Jana's back there. Can you stand up, Jana? I know your husband's in the lobby.

And God is transitioning both of these families. And they've been a special blessing, a special part of our fellowship. And we just want to recognize them.

And thank you for your investment in ministry here. Thank you for being a part. Luke's back there. Luke, thank you for your investment. Let me pray for these two couples as we seek to commission them and transition them to God's next step for them.

[43 : 34] And I would trust that if they've been a ministry to you in some way, that you let them know before they head out. When are you leaving? The fifth.

The fifth. The fifth is a good day, but no one else is allowed to leave. So, all right. Good. Let me pray for you. Lord, thank you for the ministry that you've given to us through these two families, the Lightings and the Fawcets.

God, I pray that you would go before them. That you would make their paths straight. As they trust in the Lord with all their heart, as they lean not to their own understanding, and all your ways, they acknowledge you, and you will direct their paths.

I pray those paths will be so straight and so clear. Help them to trust you in this new transition stage, and help them to trust you in the new place you take them.

Go before them. Use them mightily. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you. God bless you. Have a great week.