

Study Guide  
Series: The Power of Words  
“Family Words”

**Monday** - Proverbs 10:6-12. The Bible often reminds us that the values that guide all healthy interactions apply, if anything, more strongly to our families. The principles in these seven Hebrew proverbs speak clearly, if not specifically, to family life. Verses 6-11 contrast people who are honest, trustworthy and upright with those who deceive, who reject wisdom in order to pursue their own ways and who do violence, if not physically then emotionally. In what ways have you felt the difference between marriages and families that embody the “righteous” attitudes and speech listed here with those torn apart by the “foolish” or “wicked” qualities? Commentator, Paul Koptak, says that “Love covers all offenses” in verse 12, meant “the covering that promotes healed relationships ... Hatred stirs up, love smoothes over. Discord and dissension spring from hatred, but love nurtures harmony.” When has love brought healing in your life, not by ignoring a problem, but by being the glue that points beyond the problem to an essential connection worth preserving? Ask God to give you a heart from which words flow that help and heal the lives of those you love most.

**Tuesday** - Colossians 3:12-14. Paul called all of Christ’s followers to show five qualities: “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” When have you shown those qualities toward someone you love, or had that person showed them toward you? What other responses might you or they have chosen? Would those alternatives have made things better or worse? Every week in worship, we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Colossians said, “As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other.” How does accepting that God forgives you transform your approach to forgiving others? How does seeing yourself and others as “forgivable” help you in building durable marriage and family relationships? Ask God to help shape you into a person of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, and to give you the grace to forgive others as he has forgiven you.

**Wednesday** - Colossians 3:15-17. Paul told the Colossian Christians, “The peace of Christ must control your hearts.” He wrote that to people who lived in a world as cruel and unsettling as ours, perhaps more so. Not only that—that Greco-Roman world often turned its hatred, violence and scorn particularly on its Christian citizens. Paul’s counsel about peace, praise and gratitude was a survival manual for people who lived in a spiritual “combat zone.” Songwriter Allan Roberts wrote the often-recorded song “You Always Hurt the One You Love.” What aspects of your history and temperament make “the peace of Christ” particularly important in your closest relationships? The Message renders verse 16, “Let the Word of Christ have the run of the house.” How can you live that out? Pray that God’s peace will be more and more control of your heart and my words.

**Thursday** - Colossians 3:18-21. Too often, we get stuck on verse 18, one of the most often misinterpreted and abused verses Paul ever wrote. We get a clearer sense of what he meant from a parallel in Ephesians 5:21, where he said “Submit to one another” before specifically speaking to wives and husbands. Paul’s command to husbands was “Husbands, love your wives and don’t be harsh with them.” In the Bible, “love” referred to a chosen set of attitudes and actions, not just an emotional state. How does this show that Paul did not intend to “let husbands off easy”? In

Ephesians 5:25, he got even more explicit: “Husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.” In what ways have you seen mutual submission strengthen loving relationships? In Paul’s day, the Greek, Roman and Hebrew legal codes all gave parents virtually unlimited power over their children. How did Paul’s vision of family life lived under God’s principles emphasize mutual respect and caring, rather than a one-sided, tyrannical relationship? How can you, as a parent or a child, live out the principles of verses 20-21?

**Friday** - Ephesians 4:25-32; Psalm 19:9-14. In Ephesians, Paul says “Be angry without sinning.” Then, as though realizing that “be angry without sinning” might be just a bit vague, Paul added this timeless relational advice: “Don’t let the sun set on your anger,” or, as The Message puts it, “Don’t go to bed angry.” Anger, in itself, is not bad—it is one of four basic human emotions. But, we can be angry without sinning. Ephesians also connected the topic of anger with teaching about honesty. When have you seen a failure to honestly face anger be destructive to a relationship? Anger becomes risky when we let it fester and don’t deal with it directly. One counselor said, “Bitterness is anger grown stale.” How good are you at recognizing your own anger, and then promptly dealing constructively and honestly with it? Ask God to give you the courage to speak truth in love, the humility to say I’m sorry when you’re wrong and the heart to forgive others who admit a wrong.