

4/3/06

Encouragement for Today

"A Fool's Donkey"

Susanne Scheppmann, Co-Editor of Online Daily Devotions, Proverbs 31 Speaker Team

Key Verse:

Proverbs 19:1, "Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse." (NIV)

Devotion:

Eccentric people can make us laugh. They say and do funny things. Sometimes they appear foolish in our eyes. Have you ever appeared foolish to someone? I most certainly have.

At the beginning of the New Year, I decided I would exercise more. A three-mile walk each day became my goal. I enlisted my two tiny Shih Tzu dogs to help me achieve my fitness goal. I enjoy walking with my dogs but they both have arthritis in their hind legs. So, I devised an ingenious solution with the help of an old twin baby stroller. I plopped my dogs in the dilapidated stroller and squinted into bright morning sun. I decided to grab my sunglasses and off we went.

About two miles into my hike, I saw a lady with a darling Maltese puppy prancing beside her. She appeared somewhat startled as I approached. I grinned and said, "I know it's ridiculous pushing these dogs in a baby stroller, but they can't walk very far." She nodded rather curtly. She snatched her tiny fluffy dog up in her arms and strode away without another word.

After my invigorating exercise, I came home quite pleased with my ingenuity. I lifted the dogs out of the twin stroller. I took off my sunglasses and placed them on the kitchen counter. To my surprise and horror, one of the dark lenses had fallen out. I realized how foolish I must have looked. Strolling two dogs in a baby stroller and staring out of sunglasses with a missing lens. No wonder the woman grabbed her dog and high-tailed it away from me!

I laughed until my sides ached. Although I looked and acted foolishly, it did no harm to anyone.

Unfortunately, some of our behaviors hurt others. One of the most common themes throughout the Bible is the foolish use of our tongue. We are warned not to use our tongue to bless God and then curse men. (James 3:9-10)

Do you recall Balaam in the book of Numbers? King Balak of Moab wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites, but God commanded that Balaam bless them. The story goes on that Balaam keeps trying to figure out a way to bypass the will of God. Eventually, Balaam's donkey speaks up.

When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." (Numbers 22:27-29 NIV)

Balaam's own foolish decisions made him a fool, not the donkey's behaviors. Balaam desired to use his tongue to curse God's people. The donkey, although only a beast, held more wisdom than Balaam.

Unfortunately, more times than I care to admit my tongue has made a fool of me. Words flew from my mouth, only to be heard by the very person whom I had mentioned unkindly. Other times I believed that only my opinion on a subject could be correct. Soon enough I discovered I didn't even know what I was talking about. Yes, I have been a fool with folly falling from my lips.

However, I do desire to be a woman of wisdom—one who heeds her words. I want to be like the woman of Proverbs 31:26. “She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.”

I may behave foolishly by walking my dogs in a baby stroller. I might appear like a fool wearing sunglasses with only one lens. However, I pray that my tongue will speak wisdom. I certainly never want to give cause for a donkey to speak to me!

My Prayer for Today:

Father God, help me learn to control my foolish tongue. Remind me that my words can make me look foolish to others. Convict of the sin of gossip that will destroy my witness of Your Faithfulness in my life. I ask the Holy Spirit to take control of my tongue, so that words of wisdom flow from it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Read James 3:1-12. Then answer the following questions.

- What is one of the characteristics of a perfect person? (Verse 2)
- How is the tongue described? (Verses 6-8)
- Why does James tell us we should not curse anyone? (Verse 9)
- What comparisons does James give concerning the tongue? (Verses 10-12)

Reflection Points:

How do I use my tongue foolishly?

How do I use words of wisdom?

Does God ever think I needed a donkey to speak to me?

Power Verses:

Proverbs 18:2, “A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.” (NIV)

Proverbs 18:13, “He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame.” (NIV)

Proverbs 19:1, “Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.” (NIV)

Proverbs 13:16, “Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.” (NIV)

1 Peter 3:10, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.” (NIV)

Additional Resources:

[30 Days to Taming Your Tongue](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_tamingTongue.htm), by Deborah Smith Pegues

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_tamingTongue.htm

[Becoming a Woman Who Listens to God](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm), by Sharon Jaynes

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingAWoman.htm

[Sandpaper People](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_sandpaperPeople.htm), by Mary Southerland

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_sandpaperPeople.htm