

Proverbs 16:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Analysis

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Lev chakham yaskil pihu (לב חכם יִשְׁכִּיל פִּיהוּ, the heart of the wise teaches his mouth). The wise person's heart instructs their speech. Ve'al-sefataiv yosif leqach (וְעַל-שְׂפָתָיו יוֹסִיף לִקְחַת, and to his lips adds persuasiveness). Wisdom from the heart produces effective, persuasive speech. The proverb teaches inside-out transformation—wise hearts produce wise words. Jesus taught that the mouth speaks from the heart's overflow (Luke 6:45). Transformed hearts produce transformed speech.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom emphasized heart-to-mouth connection. Rote memorization without heart transformation produced empty words. True wisdom began in the heart (fear of the LORD) and flowed naturally into speech. Jeremiah contrasted superficial words with heart circumcision (Jeremiah 4:4, 9:25-26). Jesus condemned Pharisees' heart problem manifesting in hypocritical speech (Matthew 15:7-9, 23:25-28). Paul taught that faith comes from the heart and confession from the mouth (Romans 10:9-10).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Does your speech reflect wisdom from a transformed heart or clever words from unchanged character?
2. In what ways is your heart 'teaching your mouth'—for good or ill?
3. How does the gospel transform hearts, naturally producing gospel-saturated, wisdom-filled speech?

Interlinear Text

לֵב	חֵכֶם	יִשְׁכַּל	פִּי יְהוָה	וְעַל	שִׁפְתָּיו	יֹסֵף
The heart	of the wise	teacheth	his mouth	H5921	to his lips	and addeth
H3820	H2450	H7919	H6310		H8193	H3254

לִקְחָהּ

learning
H3948

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:28 (Parallel theme): The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.