

Faith and Family Business: Guarding Your Tongue, Saving Your Life (Proverbs 13:3)

Last time we explored an unexpected productivity metric in Proverbs—that by taking care of our words, and not simply our farm management techniques, we nourish or feed many. We become productive to the extent that our lips or words nourish life. Today's proverb continues the focus on our words, but it stresses how good words actually save *us* and not simply feed those around us. "Those who guard their lips save their lives" (Prov. 13:3).

Think for a moment of the scope of relationships in your family business. You have family members, employees, suppliers, the professionals with whom you deal, your community. Each of these relationships has its own dynamics and potential pitfalls. Words rashly spoken or even gestures inappropriately given can set back relationships, and productivity, considerably. And, as we all know, sometimes it is so very difficult to hold back those words or gestures.

Yet the Book of Proverbs emphasizes that what saves us in these situations is not our brilliant mind or our negotiating skill—what saves us is our care with words. Elsewhere Proverbs says: "Do you see the person who is rash with words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Prov. 29:20). The fool is one who answers at once, without thinking through what she or he wants to say, while the wise person weighs or ponders a response. Take time to calibrate your words with as much care as you measure other things essential to you. You just may discover that your words will save your life.