QUESTION: What is the meaning of Proverbs 25:23?

> *Proverbs 25:23 (ESV) “The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.”*

ANSWER:

This proverb uses a metaphorical comparison to teach about the consequences of our words—specifically, the destructive nature of gossip and slander.

The first part, “The north wind brings forth rain,” speaks to the predictable effect of certain winds in ancient Israel. The north wind was known to bring changes in weather, particularly rain, signaling a shift. Just as the north wind inevitably brings rain, so too does a backbiting tongue stir up anger and conflict. This natural cause-and-effect relationship is a reflection of the way our words impact others.

In essence, the passage is revealing a spiritual truth: our words are like winds—we carry and release spiritual influence through

them. Whether that influence brings blessing or harm depends on the condition of our hearts and the nature of what we speak.

The Theology Behind the Verse

1. Words carry spiritual power

Scripture consistently teaches that our words have creative and destructive power:

> *Proverbs 18:21 (ESV): “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”*

This means our speech has real consequences—not only socially, but spiritually. Gossip, slander, and false accusations can deeply wound individuals, destroy reputations, and divide communities.

2. The sin of slander and gossip is serious before God

> *James 3:5–6 (ESV): “So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire...”*

The Apostle James warns that the tongue, though small, can cause enormous damage. The backbiting tongue mentioned in Proverbs 25:23 fits this exactly—it sets emotional and relational fires that are difficult to extinguish.

Romans 1:29–30 (ESV) includes slander among the list of sins that characterize a depraved mind, showing how serious it is in God’s eyes.

3. Believers are called to speak life and truth

As followers of Christ, we are called to speak in ways that reflect His character:

> *Ephesians 4:29 (ESV): “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

Also in Colossians 4:6 (ESV):

> *“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”*

A Call to Examine Our Words

The idea of “carrying wind” with our words is a profound spiritual metaphor. Just as different winds have different effects in the natural world, each believer “releases” a spiritual atmosphere through speech. When we gossip, slander, or lie, we stir up conflict and provoke the “angry looks” Proverbs warns about. But when we speak truth in love, we bring peace, healing, and grace.

> *1 Peter 2:1–2 (ESV): “So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.”*

This verse reinforces the call to abandon destructive speech and instead grow in spiritual maturity through the Word of God.

Conclusion:

Be Carriers of the Wind of Christ
Just as Christ came preaching peace (Ephesians 2:17), let us also be messengers who spread a wind of life and blessing—through encouraging words, truthful speech, and the gospel of grace.

Let us reject the winds of rumor, slander, and malice, and instead carry the wind of God’s Spirit in our conversations.

May the Lord bless you as you speak life and truth in a world full of noise and destruction.

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