**Versus Structure:**

* This short proverb probably is laid out in an ABB′A′ pattern; it discusses dogs (A) and pigs (B), and then pigs who trample (B′) and dogs who turn to attack (A′).

**Understanding the ‘Dog’ Reference**:

* A dog was not regarded in Palestine as we are accustomed to do in this country; it was the scavenger of the village. The term ‘dog’ itself was a derogatory term. Furthermore, dogs were fierce, dangerous, and half-wild animals.
* Also, in the Old Testament, a dog was often a figure of reproach (1 Sam. 17:43; 24:14; Prov. 26:11; also in 2 Pet. 2:22).

**Understanding the ‘Pig/Swine’ Reference**:

* In Bible times, swine were dirty animals that often roamed the street scavenging for food. Pigs were also “unclean” for God’s people. Not surprisingly, *swine* became a derogatory word in the culture for people **who claimed to worship God but lived a hypocritical life of unrepentant sin**. This explains why the prodigal son ended up eating with the pigs after living in habitual sin ([Luke 15:11–32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2015.11%E2%80%9332)), why Jesus said we should not give pearls to pigs ([Matthew 7:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.6)), and why the woman in [Proverbs 11:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov%2011.22) is called a pig: “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.”
* So, the point is that one does not give what is precious (holy things or pearls) to those who will not respond appreciatively.

**What this doesn’t Mean:**

* As with other parts of Jesus’ teaching, the point is not an absolute prohibition, because then the disciple could not share the gospel with those who are not responsive. Rather, the point is that the disciple is *not obligated to share with those who are* **hard-hearted.**

**Hard-Hearted People:**

* These people are like ***pigs that trample what is precious*** and like ***dogs that turn and attack the one seeking to feed them***.

**Major Principle:** Using **discernment** is the point here.

**Practical Points:**

1. Let’s talk about evangelism.

**Question:** Have you ever heard someone say that God’s Word never returns back void?

**Isaiah 55:10-11:**

**10**“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, **11**so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

* Notice who is doing the talking? It is God himself speaking in the first person. The most important emphasis is that God is saying that **all things from his mouth always are accomplished** (God’s purposes). God’s Word will always achieve the purpose for which he sent it.
* However, for us God’s Word proclaimed or the Gospel will often go out and come back void.

**Paul practices what Jesus is talking about in sharing the gospel (the most precious of things) with some people who are rejecting it.**

**Acts 13:46: 46**And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word

of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

* Here Paul was preaching at Antioch in Pisidia and was met with jealousy, envy, and opposition of the Jews. Paul and Barnabas decide after preaching to them that they are not going to preach to them any longer; he is not going to continue in presenting this holy (this gospel) thing to them.

**Acts: 18:6**: **6**And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

* Here we see people (Jewish people) to whom the truth had been presented, but would not receive it (in Corinth). So, the reaction of Paul was to cease from attempting to share the gospel with them, and ultimately turn his full attention to the Gentiles.

**Main Point:** There is so much work to do that one must not focus so much attention on such people.

**Furthermore, Matt. 7:6 (“trample them underfoot and turn to attack you”) warns us that to some degree sharing the gospel (ministering to the lost) can be dangerous, so be discerning/careful.**

* Some people will take what is sacred to us (God’s love for us and all people), our love for others, our generous hearts, our patience/hope/desire to trust and forgive ect… and actually trample us, harm us, discourage our joy to be faithful, drain us dry ect…
1. **Hard-Hearted People:** None Christian or Christian (or so they profess)

**Prov. 23:9:** “Do not speak to a fool, for **he will scorn** the wisdom of your words.”

**Prov. 9:8:** “**A scoffer** (similar to saying fool) **who is rebuked will only hate you**; the wise, when rebuked, will love you.”

* The discerning follower of Jesus can tell when someone has a **heart issue**. Much hardheartedness comes from bitterness, anger/hate, selfishness, pride, envy, jealousy, a divisive spirit, hidden sin… **Bottom line Sin** – But an **unwillingness to repent**.
* The discerning follower of Jesus can tell when a scoffer needs to be dealt with in the church (to avoid further division), careful in their vulnerability or honesty around such people, and careful how much energy and time they spend on dealing with such a person.

**Main Point:** Believers are to be merciful, forgiving, and slow to judge (7:1-5), yet we must also be wise in discerning the true character of people.