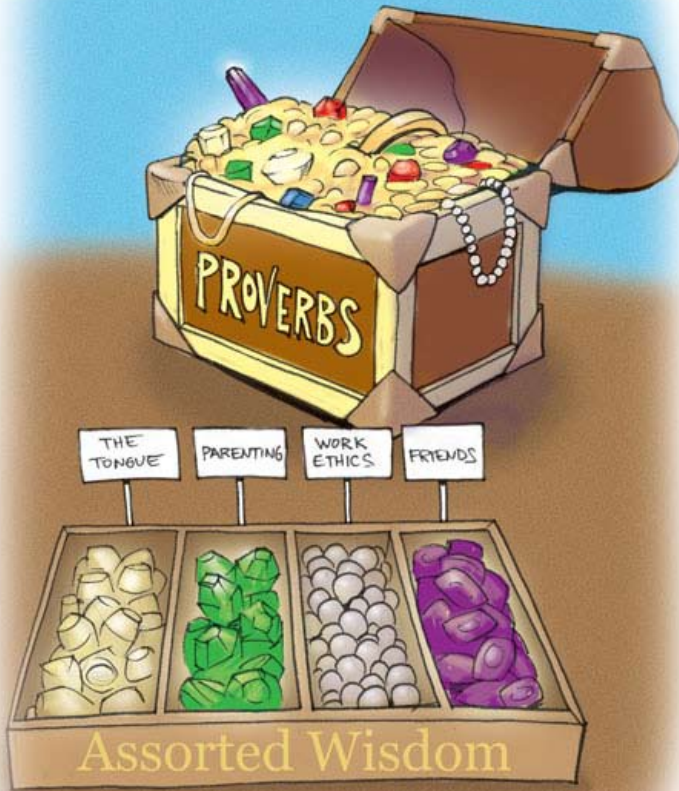


Proverbs Week 2



Monday: Proverbs 15-18

Tuesday: Proverbs 19-22

Wednesday: Proverbs 23-26

Thursday: Proverbs 27-30

Friday: Proverbs 31-Ecclesiastes 4

Introduction

Proverbs: A Sorted Issue

When you were a kid, did you ever enjoy getting a big bag of M&M's and sorting them into groups by color? Wasn't it exciting when they would come out with a new color (OK, maybe not exciting, but it was fun when you were a kid)? In this second half of our study of Proverbs we see that Proverbs is a lot like that bag of M&M's. Actually it's more like a treasure box full of precious stones. Each proverb is like a jewel that is unique and self contained. While each jewel is unique, there are also a limited number of types of jewels; diamonds, rubies, emeralds, crystals, etc. The proverbs can be divided up into major categories and practical life themes and each of these themes is like the categories of precious stones. The jewels from each category are interspersed throughout the book and are beckoning us to sort them out.

One helpful method for studying and sorting the Proverbs is to take a sheet of paper, or a spreadsheet on a computer, and, every time you come across a new theme or topic, make a new column for it. Every time you run across another "jewel" from that topic add it to the column underneath the appropriate heading. By the time you have combed through the entire book you will have sorted out several piles of jewels all organized by topic. If you have written this down then later on you will have your own quick

reference, topical guide to wisdom.

In the devotional this week we will be looking at five separate topics - one for each day -- and reading the jewels that pertain to it. Of course there are many more that we have completely ignored. One of the joys of Proverbs is that every time you read through it you will notice that the Holy Spirit makes a different set of jewels sparkle and catch your eye depending upon your place in life in that moment. On one read through you may be hit with the proverbs about gluttony and convicted to go on a diet. The next time you read it you may be convicted by the indictment to not be lazy and work hard. The topics chosen for these five are the ones that stood out on this go around. Enjoy the assortment!

Monday: Teachability

Read the following Proverbs and write a brief summary next to each one.

Proverbs 12:15

Proverbs 13:1

Proverbs 13:10

Proverbs 13:18

Proverbs 15:5

Proverbs 15:12

Proverbs 16:20

Proverbs 17:10

Proverbs 18:15

Proverbs 19:16

Proverbs 19:20

Proverbs 19:27

According to these Proverbs, what should our attitude be toward instruction and correction?

Why do you suppose a person may be resistant to receiving correction or instruction from another person?

When an employer is searching for a new employee to hire, one of the key qualities that employer looks for is an attitude of teachability in the candidate. Why is that?

Think of a time when **a)** you have been resistant to receiving godly instruction or correction in your life, or **b)** someone has been resistant to receiving correction or instruction from you. How did this resistant attitude affect your heart? The relationship? The community?

Food for thought:

Resistance to correction and instruction is the result of pride and hardness of the heart. If you are not willing to listen to someone who approaches you in love to point out an area where you are straying from God's truth, then it is time to do a serious heart check. A hard heart will only become harder, more rigid, more closed to change, and will eventually stop working.

CAUTION: Don't be deceived! Some people may feel that they are open to instruction, but are actually falling into the trap of intellectual or spiritual elitism. Some people may only receive instruction from those that they deem as more advanced intellectually or spiritually than they are. This is a trap. While it is good that this individual is willing to receive some instruction, the fact that they have placed a snobbish filter on their listening device is evidence of pride and a closed heart. God's truth is the only standard by which we can be evaluated and corrected. The Holy Spirit can use any means, and anyone to convey the message of His truth to us. Sometimes the correction comes through the mouth of a little child.

Let's keep a soft heart, an open mind, and a teachable spirit.

Tuesday: The Tongue

It's such a small muscle housed between our teeth, but it can do a world of damage in a short amount of time. We talk a lot about the heart being the wellspring of life. If our true character bubbles up out of our heart, then the tongue is the primary conduit through which it flows. How you speak and what you talk about is a direct indicator of what is going on in the character department of your heart.

Read the following Proverbs about the tongue and write a brief summary next to each one.

Proverbs 10:19

Proverbs 11:12-13

Proverbs 12:23

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 15:1-2

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 17:27-28

Proverbs 18:2

Proverbs 18:13

Proverbs 18:21

Proverbs 21:23

Proverbs 19:20

Food for thought:

Through gossip, harsh words, belittlement, ridicule, slander, lies, and manipulation we can do a serious amount of damage to an individual and a community. Do an inventory of your speech patterns over the last few months. Are there some people to whom you must go and ask forgiveness for the way you have either spoken directly to them or have spoken about them behind their back? The quickest way to destroy any community is to allow the wild horse of our tongue to get out of the stable and run rampant through the fields of people's reputations. As James taught us in James 3, let's pray that God would give us the strength and wisdom to bridle our tongues and bring them under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Read Ephesians 4:29 and make it our motto for conversational conduct.

Wednesday: Parenting

The entire book of Proverbs is about parenting. The opening chapters remind us that these little wisdom sayings are coming from a father to his son. For those of us who are parents, we need to remember that our primary responsibility is to write the moral code found in Proverbs on the heart of our children. We do this both with our words and with our actions. The glue that makes the message of wisdom stick to the hearts of our children is consistency. If our walk is consistent with our talk, then our children will be more apt to believe that the words we say flow from a place of truth and meaning.

The following Proverbs deal specifically with the role of discipline in the area of parenting. Read each Proverb and write a brief summary next to it.

Proverbs 13:24

Proverbs 19:18

Proverbs 20:11

Proverbs 22:6

Proverbs 22:15

Proverbs 23:13-14

Proverbs 29:15,17

Food for thought:

What a young child needs is to be taught the boundaries of moral character. They need to learn the difference between right and wrong; between life and death. They need swift justice. Like a funnel, the boundaries for a young child are very tight and controlled. As the child learns self-control and grows in wisdom their boundaries expand like the walls of a funnel until the young adult can experience real freedom. To invert the funnel and give a small child boundless freedom is to train the child that they are the bearers of wisdom within himself. This is a dangerous practice that will teach a child to be “wise in their own eyes” and develop the heart of a fool.

Discipline is the key to keeping a child within the funnel. When a child is walking within the moral boundaries they should be praised. When they cross the line there needs to be swift and consistent consequences that carries with it a pain that matches the severity of the offense. A small child (between ages 0-5) does not understand reason, they are concrete thinkers. They have not developed a moral conscience yet. As the parent it is our job to train them to what moral behavior looks like through consistent discipline, and both positive and negative reinforcement. As the child grows, their conscience and higher reasoning capabilities will catch up with their behaviors and they will begin to understand why their correct behaviors are right.

Parents, let's love our children by teaching them through words, actions, and discipline the way that they should behave that will bring honor and glory to God.

Thursday: The Poor

As Americans we can tend to forget that on a global scale we are all filthy rich. While we sit here worried about how we are going to pay the mortgage on our multiple bedroom home and afraid that we might have to dump the cable, the majority of the earth's population is living in utter poverty, wondering where the next morsel of bread will come from. Today's devotional is not meant to be a guilt-trip, wealth-bashing session. However, it will be a sobering reminder of the simple message of Luke 12:48, "from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."

Read the following Proverbs and write a brief summary next to each one.

Proverbs 14:21

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 17:5

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 21:13

Proverbs 22:2

Proverbs 22:16

Proverbs 22:22-23

Proverbs 28:3

Proverbs 28:8

Proverbs 29:7

Proverbs 29:14

Proverbs 31:8-9

Proverbs 31:20

What should our attitude be to those who are poor?
Why?

How aware are you of the poverty in our own city?
What steps could you take to find out more about it?

In what ways, if any, have you taken a proactive
approach to fight poverty in our city and in the
world?

This is a challenge to our community: What can we
do to live out the principles taught in these Proverbs?
How can we better Love the World in the area of
Social Justice? Let's commit to praying about it,
asking God for direction, and seeking options.

Friday: Contentment and Daily Bread

Read the following Proverbs and summarize what our attitude should be toward wealth.

Proverbs 30:8-9

Proverbs 15:17

Proverbs 16:8

Proverbs 23:4-5

The real thrust and inspiration for today's devotional comes from Proverbs 30:8-9. In these verses, what request is the writer making of God?

What does v. 9 indicate as the trap of wealth? What is the trap of poverty?

Food for thought:

As we have been studying through the Old Testament one recurring theme has been that of daily bread. God supplied the needs of the Israelites in the desert by giving them manna every morning. They could not store up the manna for the next day because it would rot over night. Every day they would wake up and rely completely on the grace of God to feed them. Then they would go to bed with nothing. That is how God works. If we are completely surrendered to Him, then He will keep us on the edge relying on Him for everything.

Read v. 9 again. Doesn't it make sense? If we have wealth -- a solid job with a stable company, a nice retirement program, a college fund for the kids, two cars with insurance, a great health package -- then it would be very easy to slip into a sense of false security. "Aha!" says the person who abhors the American corporate society. "See", they say, "we should throw it all away and live in poverty for Jesus. We should be like the monks or Mother Theresa and live in poverty." This is not really what the Bible teaches either. People like Mother Theresa are not actually poor. Their basic needs -- food, clothing, housing -- is being provided by the corporate Roman Catholic Church. A truly impoverished person is a person who has nothing, is starving, and cannot help themselves. These people are consumed with the idea of getting the next meal and their mind is not at peace and free to think about loving God and loving their neighbor. According to v. 9 it is not good to rich or poor. The key is to be simple.

Father, give us our daily bread. May we not be consumed with protecting our wealth or getting our basic needs met. May we experience the peace that

comes from knowing that everything is in your hands and that you will never let us down. Help us to simply our lives in order to free up space to serve you with all that we are.