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Lessons from the Book of Proverbs

By Ken Raggio

The Proverbs Of Solomon

In his lifetime, Solomon spoke over 3000 proverbs, and authored 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). His wise sayings predated every other major work of its kind. Why? His was God-given wisdom. The reasons for his proverbs were "to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; ...and discretion." He warned that to reject wisdom was to invite destruction. All the world should learn the Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

They Shall Call Upon Me, But I Will Not Answer

Solomon personified wisdom so she could speak: "Wisdom crieth, ...uttereth her voice, ...saying, Turn you at my reproof, ...I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, ...But ye have set at nought all my counsel." If you reject wisdom, calamity will come, and wisdom cannot help you then.

Proverbs 1:27-30 - "When distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD."

I Will Laugh At Your Calamity

Solomon wrote hundreds of proverbs - wise sayings - urging men to get

wisdom in the fear of the LORD. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: ...saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? ...ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Reject simplicity. Seek His wisdom.

Proverbs 1:33 - "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

The LORD Giveth Wisdom

In this morally bankrupt generation, wise men are loathed and fools carry the day. But the future belongs to the wise. If you "incline thine ear to wisdom, and ...seek her as silver, ...the LORD giveth wisdom." "Discretion will preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, ...to deliver thee from the strange woman."

Proverbs 2:21-22 - "For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

God Promises Rewards To Those Who Fear And Obey

Obedying the commandments adds long life and peace. Fearing God and departing from evil assures good health. "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. ...Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, ...Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour."

Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Despise Not The Chastening Of The LORD

Be careful how you talk to God about your hard trials. It is easy to forget how often we have been carnal, worldly, or offensive to His righteous will. Just as a parent bears the responsibility of disciplining a son or daughter, God has to chasten us from time to time. "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

Proverbs 3:26 - "For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

Wisdom Is The Principal Thing; Therefore Get Wisdom

The wisest man says to the children, "Hear the instruction of your father." Nobody has time to research and prove all wisdom in one short lifetime. It must be handed down from generation to generation. But a rebellious generation spurns, and thus does not possess the priceless legacy of wisdom. Simpleton, listen to your forebears! "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Proverbs 4:20,22 - "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. ...For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh."

Rejoice With The Wife Of Thy Youth

The wise man repeatedly and strenuously warned his son against the strange woman. Her lips "drop as an honeycomb, her mouth is smoother than oil: but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. ...Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." Flee to your wife!

Proverbs 5:15,18 - "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth."

Calamity Will Come Suddenly To The Wicked Man

We usually heed warnings in a way that is proportionate to the credibility of the person who issues the warning. If a foolish man gives a warning, we might completely ignore it. But if GOD issues a warning, His warnings are prophetic - no false alarms! Be warned!

Proverbs 6:12-15 - "A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy."

The Strange Woman

At least ten times in Proverbs, Solomon warned his son against strange women. "A woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. ...With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him." Be warned, mister. That woman will destroy you.

Proverbs 7:22-24 - "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

If You Hate Wisdom, You Love Death

Wisdom cries in every place, calling the sons of men to understand wisdom and receive instruction. "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me." God possessed wisdom in the beginning. Crave wisdom.

Proverbs 8:35 - "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death."

Whoso Is Simple, Let Him Turn In Hither

Wisdom built her house, hewed pillars, killed beasts, mingled wine, furnished her table, sent forth maidens, and invited everyone to her feast. "Forsake the foolish, and live." Wisdom makes an offer you must not refuse. Whatever else you are asking God for, move it down the list. Put wisdom at the top. Postpone the other blessings until you have sought the LORD for wisdom.

Proverbs 9:4-5 - "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of

the wine which I have mingled."

The Righteous Shall Never Be Removed

The contrasts between the righteous and the wicked are endless. The righteous make glad parents; the wicked cause heaviness. The righteous will not famish, but the wicked lose their substance. Blessings are on the just, but violence is on the wicked. The labour of the righteous tends toward life: the fruit of the wicked to sin. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth. Above all, God promises eternal life to the righteous.

Proverbs 10:30 - "The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth."

Righteousness Is Right, Wickedness Is Wrong

Proverbs 11 addresses many topics. God hates false balances, but delights in a just weights. Pride brings shame. Integrity guides the upright. Righteousness directs and delivers a man. Transgressors are headed for trouble. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." The theme in all the sayings is that righteousness is always right, and wickedness is always wrong.

Proverbs 11:19 - "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."

A Good Man (Loves Instruction)

Every proverb has the potential of an entire sermon. Every wise saying could be elaborated and amplified many times over. But the important thing is to learn the basics. In the end, you will either be wise or foolish, virtuous or shameful, diligent or slack, honorable or despised, true or false, good or bad. "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge. He that hateth reproof is brutish." Seek to know what is right and strive to be good. Any brute can be bad.

Proverbs 12:2 - "A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn."

Learn To Hear Instruction

A wise son hears his father's instruction. He that fears the commandments will be rewarded. He that regards reproof will be honoured. He that walks with wise men shall be wise. But scorers hear not rebuke. The way of transgressors is hard. Poverty and shame come to him that refuses instruction. Whoso despises the word or is companion of fools shall be destroyed. Parents, discipline your child to follow instructions! God disciplines and chastens us so we will learn wisdom.

Proverbs 13:24 - "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him."

Righteousness Exalteth A Nation

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Without the fear of God, death and destruction are unavoidable. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life - an escape from the

snare of death. The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish. Upright men fear the LORD. What is true for the individual is true for the nation. A nation must fear God in righteousness.

Proverbs 14:34 - "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

The Prayer Of The Upright Is His Delight

Does God love to hear your voice? Judge your tongue. Soft answers turn away wrath. Grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the righteous uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue is a breach in the spirit. The words of the pure are pleasant words, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. The prayer of the upright is God's delight.

Proverbs 15:29 - "The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."

Pride Goes Before Destruction

Pride is a too-high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority. Paul, in Romans 12:3, admonishes every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." Solomon said, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. ...Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Humble yourself before you self-destruct.

Proverbs 16:5 - "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD."

Think Before You Speak

Your heart should govern your mouth - not the other way around. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. ...the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. ...Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." God favors a well-disciplined man.

Proverbs 16:7 - "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

A King And His Throne

A king, being a sovereign on earth, wields the power of life and death over men. Wise men should seek his favor. The king's word must be righteous for the sake of his throne. To fail in that is an abomination.

Proverbs 16:10-15 - "A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: ...The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it. ...In the light of the king's countenance is life; ...It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness."

Those Who Cause Others To Suffer Will Be Punished

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." The godly virtue is to overlook others' faults as much as is possible. "He that covereth

a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Tattletales and gossips are troublemakers. "He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief." God will judge you for your verbal sins. Be kind to others.

Proverbs 17:5 - "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished."

Sometimes, It Is Better To Be Quiet

Paul admonished the Thessalonians to "study to be quiet." Solomon said "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife. ...He that hath knowledge spareth his words: ...Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." If you can't say something good, don't say anything. "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue."

Proverbs 17:7 - "Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince."

The Fool And The Wise Man

The 18th chapter of Proverbs renounces fools. "A fool hath no delight in understanding." Wicked men come with contempt, disgrace and reproach. It is not good to accept a wicked person and overthrow a righteous man's judgment. A fool speaks contentious words, and calls for violence. His words eventually destroy him. Talebearers wound others, slothful men are great wasters, and he that prejudges people gets folly and shame. But a man with desire separates himself, and seeks and interacts with all wisdom.

Proverbs 18:15 - "The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge."

Treat Other People Kindly

Proverbs contains hundreds of lessons on human relations. The wise man says that a man's spirit will ordinarily sustain him, but if his spirit is wounded by another, how can he bear his infirmity? "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city." "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." "Contentions are like the bars of a castle." We should not offend others, but strive to be a friend and brother.

Proverbs 18:24 - "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Divine Counsel

Compare your wisdom to God's. Well, that's not a fair comparison. He is infinite. He has seen everything and knows everything. He has witnessed every act and thought of every man who ever lived. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. We are finite, limited, inexperienced, ignorant and unlearned. Still, we trust ourselves, and don't trust HIM? That's illogical! "...it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," Jeremiah 10:23.

Proverbs 19:21 - "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."

Man's Goings Are Of The LORD

You will never beat God at His game. You are not your own. "All souls are mine," God says (Ezekiel 18:4). Your destiny is in God's hands. There is one destiny for the righteous, and another destiny for the wicked. Rather than spend your life trying to do your own thing, why not spend your life trying to do God's will? "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee."

Proverbs 20:24 - "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?"

Your Prayers Ignored Because You Ignore Others'

God cares for the poor and requires us to care. "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, ...shall surely come to want. ...Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them," Proverbs 22:16,22-23. If you want God to hear YOUR cries, you must not ignore the cries of those in need.

Proverbs 21:13 - "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

Foresee The Evil

What error is more inexcusable than the one we saw coming? It is one thing to make a mistake in ignorance, but when God has given explicit warnings concerning virtually every hazard a man can face, what is our excuse? One-third of the Bible is prophetic in nature. If you ignore the warnings about things to come, you are inviting disaster. That is why I am so invested in understanding Bible prophecy. I want to be prepared.

Proverbs 22:3 - "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."

Remove Not The Ancient Landmark

A landmark establishes a boundary or a property line. It is often a legal instrument proving ownership. More than that, landmarks perpetuate legacies and posterities. Things which have been sacred for ages have far more wisdom in them than you can imagine. That is especially true with proven truths and precepts based on the Bible. This perverse generation would recklessly destroy priceless, holy things. Never remove boundaries that separate the church from the world. You will sorely regret the loss.

Proverbs 22:28 - "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." 23:10 - "Remove not the old landmark."

Drunkards and Gluttons

"Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: ...Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. ...At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Refuse all mind-altering substances. Righteous men must be sober, moderate and temperate.

Proverbs 23:2-3 "And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to

appetite."

Train A Child To Be Wise

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." You cannot have a wise child who has not been disciplined - corrected when he is wrong. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. ...Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

Proverbs 23:19 - "Hear thou, my son, and be wise."

God's Prophetic Word Works Like His Creative Word

This reprobate generation says evil is good, and good is evil. But payday is still coming. The wicked will not survive their wickedness, and the righteous will eventually receive their reward. IT IS WRITTEN. God's prophetic word works just like His creative word. It just takes a little longer. "There shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."

Proverbs 24:14 - "So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off."

A Man's Gift

What is that you have? The gift of God is your destiny. Moses' rod, David's sling, Elijah's mantle - every man's gift is different. "A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth," Proverbs 17:8. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men," Proverbs 18:16. Avoid pursuing things God has not given you to do. God gave you your gift to do His will.

Proverbs 25:14 - "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain."

The Fool And His Folly

Mismatches: snow in summer - rain in harvest - honor for a fool. Honoring a fool is like shooting a stone from a sling. As a whip for a horse, or a bridle for a mule, a rod is for the fool's back. A parable in the mouth of a fool is like a thorn in the hand. Fools return to their folly like dogs to their vomit. The only reason to answer a fool is to expose his self-deluded conceit.

Proverbs 26:4 - "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."

Riches

Riches can be a blessing or a curse. "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." God rains his blessings on good and bad men. Wealth is not proof that God approves. Poverty is not proof God disapproves. "The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all." Seek first His kingdom.

Proverbs 26:10 - "The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors."

Appreciate A Friend's Rebuke

When we need correction, as we all eventually do, it comes best from a dear friend. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Toss out your resentment, and receive your friend's honest appraisal. "Open rebuke is better than secret love." "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. Thine own friend, ...forsake not; ...for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off."

Proverbs 27: 17 - "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

They That Seek The LORD Understand All Things

The surest way to get wisdom and understanding is to seek the LORD. We must not merely ask for His blessings, but conscientiously hear and obey His instructions, whether they are ancient or current directives. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." We must empty ourselves if we hope to be filled with His treasures. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Proverbs 28:5 - "Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things."

Confess Your Sins

The entire book of Proverbs appeals to the young man to flee from sin and sinners. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not," Proverbs 1:10. Solomon posted warnings against keeping company with foolish men and foolish women. He admonished against pursuing the follies of riches, keeping company with mischief-makers and every kind of evil. His overriding theme was to forsake all wickedness and do righteousness. That necessarily includes admitting your sins and turning from them.

Proverbs 28:13 - "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Suddenly Destroyed Without Remedy

Truth always produces the right outcome. Lies always produce the wrong outcome. Truth will prevail, even when men steadfastly ignore its warnings. Although a man may sin a thousand times without consequences, truth says he cannot continue. When everything comes to judgment, the righteous will always outlast the wicked. "When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall. ...every man's judgment cometh from the LORD." Beware, lest you foolishly presume that you are invincible.

Proverbs 29:1 - "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Give Me Neither Poverty Nor Riches

Here is a great prayer worth repeating. "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me." Too much prosperity may tempt me to become self-sufficient and forget God.

Too much poverty may tempt me to steal or rail against God. I prefer to have only as much as is convenient to live a modest life.

Proverbs 30:9 - "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

The Virtuous Woman

Proverbs 31 is "the words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. ...give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings." She admonished him to avoid strong drink, and judge righteously. Then she described the model woman - the virtuous woman - to her son. She was morally perfect, invaluable, trustworthy, good, sews, shops, cooks, gardens, is strong, wise, talented, merciful, thoughtful, well-dressed, industrious, honorable, kind, hard-working and respected. The future of such a woman is certain.

Proverbs 31:25,30 - "She shall rejoice in time to come. ...she shall be praised."

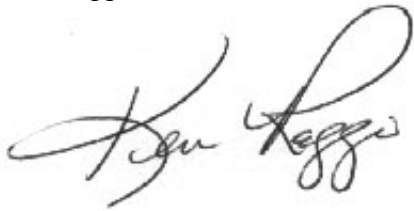
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