

Read: Proverbs 27

Key Verses: Proverbs 27: 17

Reflect:

During my high school years, I graciously received a “weekly allowance” from my parents for helping out with the household chores. I soon discovered that my newly acquired tastes for fashionable athletic footwear and costs associated with dating and refilling the gas tank on my Dad’s car were more than I was earning! When I inquired about a raise in my allowance, I received some fatherly advice that I would later recognize as wise counsel. In his sharp wit, Dad said, “get a job!”

My search for part-time employment led me to a local country grocery store where I was able to get a job working in the meat department. Over the course of time, I was trained how to grind meat into hamburger, use a band saw to cut steaks and learn the necessity of properly cleaning the equipment and sharpening the knives! There was a quote on the wall in the butcher shop: “Dull Knives are more Dangerous than Sharp Knives!”

- Dull knives are dangerous because they require more force when cutting meat
- More force increases the possibility of slipping and causing injury
- A sharpening iron is a vital tool for a meat cutter to accomplish his/her task

This principle has proven to be a valuable lesson in my personal life. I was fortunate to be able to utilize my student training as a meat cutter to find a good paying job while attending college. Also, I was able to apply the lessons learned from my father’s counsel as it relates to personal responsibility and in seeking out and following the sound advice and wisdom of godly men.

In my life’s journey, I’ve encountered many “dull men” whose influence would have led to dangerous consequences with the potential for emotional and physical injury.

Today, I’m so grateful for the wisdom and insight from the men with whom I meet with weekly for prayer and honest dialogue about life. They are a genuine blessing to help keep me sharp in preparation for the daily tasks of ministry!

Prayer:

“God, help me seek godly wisdom and biblical friends. Bring people into my that will sharpen me so I can be a better disciple of You to others. It’s all for Your glory. In your name, I pray, Amen.”

Read: Proverbs 28

Key Verse: Proverbs 28:18

Reflect:

When was the last time you stopped to read the gossip magazine in the grocery store check out lane? If you are like me, you find yourself getting caught up in the latest pit-falls, break-ups, and break-downs of celebrities. Our culture celebrates when people's lives fall apart. When you neglect your relationship with God, you are headed for a fall.

Proverbs talks a lot of integrity, character, and walking according to God's design. Working on your integrity or personal character is a lot like taking your car to a mechanic for regular maintenance. If you continue to work on the inner workings of the machine, it will continue to function smoothly. When your "check engine" light comes on in your car, but you refuse to take it in for repair, you are headed for a breakdown. The same is true of your life. Do you desire to meet with God in prayer? Do you read His Word seeking his wisdom and direction? Do you repent of your sin and knowing disobedience? If the answer is "no" then your spiritual check engine light is ON.

Our Heavenly Father desires for his people to be pursuing him on the road of life and that none of us end up in a spiritual ditch. We pursue integrity by drawing near to God in Prayer, meditating on God's truth, and living according to his will. He will repair what is broken in our hearts, and restore us. James 4:8 tells us that if we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.

Prayer:

"God, keep my mind and heart set on you. Save me from selfishness, complacency, and sinful desires, and continue to draw me to yourself. Help me to walk upright just as Jesus did. In Christ's name, Amen."

Read: Proverbs 29

Key Verses: Proverbs 29:22-23

Reflect:

It seems that in today's culture we are always outraged about something. The thinking seems to be that in order to get anything done, you have to get really mad about it first. However, in God's Kingdom, the opposite is true. In fact, the author of Proverbs tells us "a man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression." (Proverbs 29:22) Anger (that is not righteous) is not only an improper response, but it in fact leads to the violation of God's law.

The wisdom is echoed in the book of James, as he tells us that "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20) Anger is an emotion rooted in our sinful flesh. As a new creation in Christ, our emotions and our responses are supposed to look different than they did before Christ. Anger is often associated with pride. We become angry when our pride is disrespected, and the author of Proverbs addresses our pride in the following verse, "one's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor." (Proverbs 29:23)

The author of Proverbs is telling us here that in the Kingdom of God, the way up is down. The way to receive honor is to be lowly in spirit. That doesn't mean downtrodden or beaten down, but it means that our pride rests not on ourselves, but in the finished work of Jesus Christ. As Jesus himself says in Matthew 20:16, "so the last will be first and the first last." When our focus is on building our own Kingdom it can't also be in the Kingdom of God.

Prayer:

"Father, help me to not respond in anger. Allow your forgiveness to wash over me and transform my responses. Let me focused on building your Kingdom and not my own."

Read: Proverbs 30

Key Verses: Proverbs 30:5-6

Reflect:

Trust. Confidence. These take much time to develop and only an instant to lose. We put our trust and confidence in people, jobs, money, possessions, only to be disappointed when they break our hearts or the bottom falls out. Too often, our trust and confidence are all based on ourselves and our own accomplishments.

These words tell us that the Word of God is true and can be trusted with confidence. We can place our total trust in His Word. God gives us His Word to be our infallible standard for living. His Word will help us determine whether something is good or evil, truth or error, right or wrong. “Every Word of God” is true and can be trusted in total confidence.

God is our shield “if” we take refuge in Him. We must know Him first. We must choose to study His Word, apply His Word, and live out His Word; otherwise, we are still trying to do it all on our own. To study and apply the Word of God to our lives provides the confidence that we can always trust God. His Word is perfect. Nothing needs to be added or deleted. Have confidence in the Word of God! Read it often, study its words, hide it in your heart, live it! Trust the Word of God!

Prayer:

“God, I know that your word is true. Help me hide Your word in my heart. I desire to live a life according to Your word that is pleasing to you. I will find my confidence in You. Amen.”

Read: Proverbs 31

Key Verse: Proverbs 31:10-31

Reflect:

Whether we are male or female, we all have a certain image in our minds of what makes an “ideal wife”. The proverb we are reading today paints us a beautiful picture of a godly wife. The Bible says a wife like this is more precious than jewels! For many women, the wife in our text represents what feels like an impossible standard. For many men, she bears little resemblance to the “trophy” wife they dream of. But as we look closer, we will see that she is described as “excellent” and “precious” not because of how she looks or what she does, but because of who she is. The woman she is, and the asset she becomes to her family, flows from the wisdom of the Lord. She has taken the Word of the Lord and put her faith in it. This faith governs her actions, attitudes, and decisions.

Let's look at this wise woman a little closer:

1. She has earned the trust of her husband because her humble service to the family is respectful and loving. V. 11, 28
2. She works hard both inside and outside of the home. V. 13-16; 27
3. She makes conscientious decisions with her money. She invests in profitable/eternal things. V. 16
4. She is kind and considerate. V. 20
5. She is strong and feminine. She has dignity. Her faith helps her conquer her fears and insecurities. V. 25
6. She knows that inner beauty is most important. She pursues godliness more than physical beauty. V. 30

Now let's think about the benefits she reaps from being such a giver:

1. Her husband trusts her. He and her children express gratitude and verbal affirmation both publicly and privately. V. 28-29; 31
2. She is able to help support her own family and give generously to others. V. 18; 21
3. She is able to become a leader to those around her. V. 26
4. She is able to enjoy life with laughter and deep faith. V. 25
5. She takes care of her physical health and appearance so she can be strong and look her best. V. 17; 30

This amazing, anonymous woman of scripture, is an inspiration for women. Her husband leads the way for men as well, as he encourages and empowers his wife.

For Journaling:

If you are female, how has this woman's life challenged and inspired you? If you are male, how can you thank, affirm and encourage the women in your life? Pray that God would give you wisdom and guide you as you seek to honor Him in your role. Extra activity: Try rewriting a paraphrased version of these verses, but use today's culture as your basis. For example- Verse 15- "She's up early in the morning, making sure the family eats a healthy meal to start their day."