

## Mid Week • Proverbs Topics #2

### INTRO

This is our 4<sup>th</sup> week in Proverbs, and our second week in studying through the second section of the book that stretches from Ch. 10 -29

Because of the nature of Proverbs, instead of studying in a sequential verse by verse manner as we normally do, we are looking at these chs. *thematically*, and then going verse by verse, tracking a subject in several representative proverbs

For instance, last week we looked at two groups of people: The Wise and the Foolish, as well as the Righteous and the Wicked

Tonight we will be looking at the subjects of Motives, & Poverty & Wealth

### MOTIVES

There is a tremendous emphasis on the heart throughout the Proverbs, and really throughout the entire Bible

The heart is the *seat of the soul*, the *center of personality*

And when we talk about the heart, we are typically speaking about *motives*

The reasons that *move* us

Proverbs has some powerful gems of wisdom regarding motives and the heart

<b>{Prov 14:12} There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.</b>
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This proverb is so important, it's repeated word for word in 16:25

The idea here is that the heart and mind of man can be so deceived that what *seems* right and good is in fact the very path to hell

Jesus said it this way, "***Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to death, and many there are who walk it.***"

The deceitfulness of sin is that it masquerades as good

All temptation promises to give us something *good*, something *pleasurable*

How many people have talked themselves *into* sin;

They have justified their theft, their crime, their adultery, their addiction to whatever?

Those is the cults believe they are right and everyone else is wrong

They've swallowed the error of the organization or group they're a part of and believe they are right with God

But in fact, they've been fed a lie

Many of those destined for hell are *sincere*, but they are *sincerely wrong*!

Sincerity is not the issue - Truth is!

The place we discover truth is in God's Word

And the way to truth is through Jesus!

He said, "**I am the way.**"

This verse reminds us of the sad and difficult fact that there are many well meaning and seemingly good folk who are none the less destined for destruction

It is only the gospel of Jesus Christ that saves, and it is why we need to be all the more diligent to share that message

**{Prov 15:11} Hell and Destruction are before the LORD; So how much more the hearts of the sons of men.**

There is *nothing* hidden from God - not even the very depths of hell  
So how silly to think that we could harbor something in our hearts and keep it secret

God sees our hearts and knows our thoughts

Rom 2:16 says . . .

**God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ . . .**

God will not only judge the *actions*, but the secrets of men's hearts which are the real motivation of all their deeds

What will shock the assembled creation is not so much the heinous atrocities committed throughout history, but the darkness and evil of men's hearts who imagined even *more gross and wicked things*

**{Prov 16:2-3} All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.**

**{3} Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.**

It is so easy to rationalize our way!

We set our own standard - usually one just for us, and another for everyone else

The standard for others we set real *high* - ours we set *low*

If our righteousness is a relative one of comparing ourselves to others, then we usually come off looking pretty good, because in personal comparisons we tend to pick those who are well beneath us

Anyone looks good next to Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan

But God's judgment isn't relative to the standard of man's righteousness

It's relative to *His* righteousness

We must wean ourselves off the tendency to compare ourselves to one another and instead commit ourselves to the Lord

As we do that, then we will find ourselves falling into right alignment with Him and so our lives will be established

**{Prov 17:3} The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts.**

It isn't always easy for us to know what lies behind certain actions and attitudes we hold

We probably all have particular areas of our lives that area mystery to us - we simply do not know why we do some of the things we do

Part of growing in Christ is the process of being refined by the Lord, where He tests our hearts and brings to the surface the hidden things that drive us

Just as it takes intense fire to refine precious metal and drive away the impurities that defile it, so the Lord uses the fire of trial to purge and cleanse us

This period of purging and cleansing is usually painful because it goes to the very root of who and what we are  
Sometimes there is a deep inner brokenness that God wants to heal  
And as He works in our lives to that end, things can get messy  
    We don't always yield to the Lord's hand  
    We may complain or get rebellious  
    We may lash out at others in the midst of our pain  
*Marriage* is one of the main tools God uses to conform us to His image  
As a man or a woman tries to live with their mate, issues of selfishness and personal brokenness will surface  
The marriage vow demands that we love our mate and bear with them while the Spirit works in them to heal and restore

### **Change**

That brings us to a subject that is really quite important in understanding the process of spiritual growth  
Motives *do* proceed actions; actions are motivated by our internal attitudes and priorities  
What we don't often realize is that that also works in reverse  
Over the long run, our *attitudes* are effected by our *actions*

What I mean is this, and it's something we can probably all relate to:  
Emotions tend to proceed actions - we *feel* a certain way about something and that molds the way we behave  
The reason a lot of Christians are *stuck* in a particular area of their life is that they don't *feel* like doing anything else  
But God has designed us in such a way that emotions are supposed to flow *from*, not initiate action  
Sin has reversed this, and made emotions *prior* to actions; they tend to *dictate* them  
As we follow the Lord and walk faithfully before Him, obeying His commands, we find that the emotions which once used to dominate our will and motivate our actions, respond and take their rightful place as *reactions* to our actions  
Let me use an example:  
Esmerelda loved soap operas - in fact she virtually wasted her day watching TV  
She neglected the housework and her duties as a wife and mother  
She knew she should take care of her responsibilities and spend time with the Lord rather than TV - but she was so wrapped up in the lives of the fictitious characters on the tube, she lost touch with the reality of her own life  
The romance and drama of *Days of Our Loser Lives* and *As The Stomach Turns* became more appealing than ironing and washing and cleaning  
One day, being especially convicted by her obsession with daytime TV, she decided to take care of things and leave the tube off  
All day long, she itched to turn it on, but she didn't

When her husband got home that night she asked him to unplug it and put it in the garage for a week - she didn't want to have the temptation so fierce the next day  
He did, and the next day she had a really good time with the Lord and in listening to the radio as she went about her duties as a domestic engineer  
After a week of this, the longing to watch TV wasn't nearly so strong, and after a full month, the desire had all but passed away  
You see - her affections changed because she chose to do what was right, even when she didn't feel like it

Don't live *out of* or *by* your emotions

Live in obedience to the Lord and watch how your emotions change and comply in joy to your will

## POVERTY & WEALTH

**{Prov 10:22} The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.**

The things that make for true wealth come from the Lord -

But the things the world counts as treasure often result in sorrow

They lead to sorrow when they are lost, or stolen, or when we finally realize that what we worked so hard to gain doesn't really satisfy

The riches God offers are genuine treasure in that they enrich our lives with that which can not be taken away

In Luke 12: 15 Jesus said,

**"One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."**

It's not about what YOU possess - It's about who possesses YOU!

Does Jesus possess you? Have you been bought at a price - the blood of Christ?

If so, then you are in the *place of blessing*

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Look at what this verse teaches us about prayer . . .

**The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.**

We should not be at all ashamed or hesitant to boldly come before the Lord and ask Him to bless us!

God is a God of blessing, not cursing - He *wants* to bless and is *able* to bless

We should come before Him unapologetically and request His blessing

**{Prov 11:24-26} There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty.**

**{25} The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.**

**{26} The people will curse him who withholds grain, But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.**

These verses well capture the idea of sowing and reaping that is a consistent theme

in scripture  
In 2 Corinthians 9:6 we read . . .

**He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

In v. 24, the "one who scatters" is the one who is *liberal* in life - not politically, but in the way they live and work and treat others

To be *liberal* means to *give freely*

The man or woman who goes through life being sensitive to how they can bless others will find that they never lack for resources to give

But the one who stays his or her hand when it is in their power to do good, shall end up finding that what they were seeking to hold on to slipped away

It's the story Jesus told of the 3 servants who were given various amounts of money by their master and told to invest them

The first 2 took what they had and invested it, and earned double for their investment

The 3<sup>rd</sup> servant tried to just hold on to what he had - and ended up losing it altogether

All that we have, God wants us to invest and use for His glory

When this life is over, the winner is not the one that's been able to amass the largest bank account and biggest holdings

Monopoly is just a game, not a philosophy of life - too bad so many people don't realize that

God created us in such a way that our hands should be continually open in giving

Verse 25 says . . .

**{25} The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.**

Several of you ladies have already heard this story so bear with me while I share it with those who haven't heard it . . .

A Water Bearer in India had two large pots, each hung on the end of a pole which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

Daily for two years the water carrier made his trip to the well, delivering only one and a half pots of water to his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect to the end for which it was made to do.

But after two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the Water Bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to the master's house.

Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get

full value from your efforts," the pot said.  
The Water Bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers on the side of the path."

And as they went along, the pot saw the flowers and was cheered by their beauty.

But at the end of the trail, only half full, it felt the familiar shame.

Again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

He said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on *your* side of your path? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

**{25} The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.**

Friends - God does not use only perfect vessels

He uses cracked pots

Each of us has our own unique flaws.

And if we will allow it, the Lord will use our flaws to grace His Father's table.

What we must do is offer ourselves to Him to be used

You might say - "But I can't be generous, I'm barely making it myself."

The generosity that Solomon is speaking of here isn't merely money - It's all of life

We all have the same amount of time - We all have life

If we've been born again - we possess grace and truth - We are rich in *love*

As we generously bestow these on others, our own lives will be enriched

**{Prov 13:7} There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.**

As we've already seen, and as Solomon was supremely qualified to say - money constitutes only a miniscule part of real wealth

Who's richer?

The billionaire who sits alone in a secluded room high atop a hotel in Las Vegas

He's so fearful of disease and dying that he demands all visitors take a shower with antibacterial soaps and wear special clothing before he will let them in the room

And he is so distrustful of people's greed for his money that he shuns all but a few servants

Or the retired auto mechanic who's never had any money, but who's had a full life of marriage and family and the Lord

And whose house sees all the kids and their mates and children come over for dinner every Sunday

Both men are at the end of their years, and they know it  
Looking back over a long life- who counts himself the better off?

**{Prov 13:8} The ransom of a man's life is his riches, But the poor does not hear rebuke.**

This verse is a simple and practical observation about wealth

The idea is this - when trouble comes, the wealthy person is better able to deal with it because he has cash!

The welfare mom finds it hard just to get by with the monthly bills - let alone some unforeseen need, like a doctor bill or a car repair

The rich are able to better absorb these unforeseen needs because they have the resources

That's what it means when it says, "*The ransom of a man's life is his riches.*"

But the last part of the verse is very enlightening = "*But the poor does not hear rebuke*"

The point is this: *The accumulation of wealth takes discipline*

Most of the rich aren't wealthy cause they got lucky and won the lottery

They're wealthy because they lived *wisely*

They saved and invested rather than impulsively spending on whatever struck their fancy this week

They understood the principles of financial success and lived by them

And the result was that their 10 or 35 years of discipline lead to great reward and the greater freedom that wealth can secure for the one who uses it wisely

It's generally true that the accumulation of wealth demands *discipline*

Many people are in poverty simply because they would not exercise *self-control*

When they were rebuked by their parents or their friends or even circumstance for their wasteful ways, they refused to listen

One of the most important lesson parents can teach their children is the lesson of saving and reigning in uncontrolled spending

**{Prov 13:23} Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, And for lack of justice there is waste.**

This is an eloquent picture of much of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world

There isn't a problem with the ground's ability to produce food

The problem is in the social customs of the people who are either too lazy, or who aren't allowed to grow food by stupid government policies

A classic example of this is the nation of Russia

Russia is a vast land of fertile ground

There are portions of Russia that are capable of producing crops that could end world hunger tomorrow - but they lie fallow because the people have neither the desire, nor the wherewithal to grow crops

According to recent studies - most of the famines we've seen over the last 20 years are not the result of climatic changes or inherently bad agricultural conditions

They're the result of despotic governments and their unjust laws

Ethiopia - Russia - North Korea - Sudan = all these famines are the result of

government policies

We hear the population control people saying that the human population of Earth is much too high and that at the present rate of growth the world will run out of resources in just a couple generations

They not only advocate a reduction of the growth rate, but in many circles are actually calling for a population *reduction*

I remember Paul Erlich in the 70's who wrote *The Population Bomb* saying that by the 1990's half of California would be under concrete!

There were many other, equally silly things he and others of his ilk said

But all of this flies in the face of God's command to Adam and Eve and their progeny to be fruitful and multiply and *fill the earth*

God has designed into the planet the ability to feed every single person with a good, healthy diet

If there is famine, if there is lack and want - it's the result of 1 of 2 things:

- 1) either it's the judgment of God -or-
- 2) man's sloth and injustice

History shows that poverty is generally the result of either *sloth* or *injustice*

**{Prov 15:16-17} Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.**

**{15:17} Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred.**

A bean burrito shared by lovers is better than veal cordon bleu between Rush Limbaugh and Patricia Ireland

**{Prov 19:17} He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.**

Tender and compassionate outreach to the poor is a consistent theme in all of scripture

In fact, the prophets remind us that God judges a people on the way they treat the poor and disadvantaged

When we give to those who are in genuine need, it is like lending to God  
And God will be a debtor to no one!

**{Prov 21:17} He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.**

This returns to something we just considered - that the accumulation of wealth requires discipline

Here's the flip side - the one who loves pleasure, the one who pampers his flesh rather than controlling it - will be in *continual* debt

The level of debt in the US public is so great, it cannot be paid!

We have lived beyond our means for far too long, and one day the piper will have to be paid

American materialism is a pied piper that has led us down the road of a false prosperity

And the tune is finally winding down

Soon it will be time to pay - but many experts say that we simply don't have the



ability to do so

**{Prov 28:20} A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.**

Once again Solomon shows that the key to prosperity, whether material or spiritual, is *faithfulness*  
In the parable of the talents, the key was faithfulness  
Because the servants proved themselves faithful in a little, the master rewarded them with more  
That parable Jesus told is in fact what the Lord does in each of our lives  
At first, He gives us something little so that we might see where we are in regards to trusting Him  
If we are faithful, He gives a bit more  
And if we're faithful there, He adds  
But if we are unfaithful at any step, then it is there we stay till we learn to be faithful

On the flip side of faithfulness is the desire for wealth for wealth's sake  
Rather than a disciplined course of life that faithfully responds to the Lord is the idea that there is a fortune to be made out there that just requires cleverness and being in the right place at the right time  
The promise of the quick and easy fortune is abundant in the world as we all know!  
It's what drives millions to buy lottery tickets  
Get rich quick schemes abound  
You've got your pyramids, and Ponzis and the latest and greatest multi-level marketing strategies that hold forth the promise of getting rich with minimum effort  
Being a user of email - I get chain letters and quack offers virtually every week that promise I'll get rich if I just send \$5 to the next person on the list and then send the letter along to 20 people  
Got one two weeks ago that said Microsoft and Disney had joined together in a study tracking email and all I had to do was forward the letter to 20 people, and Bill Gates and Michael Eisner would send me one of two prizes; an all expense paid trip for two to Disneyworld in Florida, or \$5,000. Imagine That!  
It's a hoax - and there are dozens that make their way around the internet  
They all feed that inner desire in many people to get rich

Listen to Paul's warning in this regard in 1 Tim 6

- 6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.**
- 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.**
- 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**
- 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.**
- 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed**

**from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

It is not wrong to be rich - indeed, God will bless some so that they may have the capacity to be a blessing

Romans 12 says that there is the *gift of giving*, which implies that that one has been blessed with an abundance to give!

But we must not set our affection and desire on wealth

We must keep our affections for Christ and find our contentment in Him, not our balance sheet