

Mid Week • Proverbs Topics #3

INTRO

Tonight as we look at the book of Proverbs thematically, we'll be looking at the subjects of

1. Planning & Diligence,
2. Honesty
3. Pride & Humility

PLANNING & DILIGENCE

In Proverbs 4:26 that we've already studied, Solomon told his son . . .

Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.

Solomon's counsel here is probably some of the most important he could give a young person

Youth tends to live for the moment, for the present, with little regard for the future

It's a mark of maturity that we stop and think about how our present choices will effect the future

Every choice has consequences!

Wisdom is having the ability to play out present choices to their ultimate conclusions, and then acting in accord with what's best

So Solomon rightly warns his son to consider where his steps are taking him

Ponder the path of your feet

It is only recently that law enforcement has seen the value of this and began bringing adult men into juvenile detention centers and letting them talk to the kids about what a life of crime means

Criminals who have been sentenced to life in prison are also going into public schools to tell their story

The idea is that when kids hear it from the mouths of those who are suffering for foolish choices, it will warn them and hopefully help them ponder the path of their steps

But this isn't just good advice for teenagers and adolescents

This is good advice for many adults today who haven't learned the lesson of living past this moment

Whose anger throws them into a rage so that they do and say things they later regret

Whose unrestrained materialism means heaps of credit debt

Whose procrastination results in countless missed opportunities and pain

One isn't an adult just because they're over 18.

Among other things, maturity is defined by the ability to ponder the path of one's feet and think ahead about where present choices are leading

It was Socrates who said that the unexamined life is not worth living
The life that is lived well, takes time to stop and consider how it has gotten
where it is, and where it is going
This word "ponder" means to weigh something in the mind, tossing it up and
down to get the feel of it; to go round and round something to give it close
inspection
It's the picture of the guy who walks round and round the car he's thinking
about buying.
He kicks the tires - he opens the hood and trunk - he checks the glove box -
he goes for a test drive

How many of us take the time to *ponder* our lives like this?

You see, that's exactly what it takes to Ponder - time
This kind of inspection demands that we get away to a private place and do
some serious time laying ourselves before the Lord for His inspection and
our personal self-revelation
Psa 119:59 says . . .

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

In Ezekiel 18 we find this . . .

{27} "When a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

{28} "Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Just as any jet on a long distance flight needs an occasional course correction,
so do we on the long distance journey we call life
Paul wrote to the Ephesians in ch. 5 . . .

{15} See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

{16} redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

{17} Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Walk circumspectly - which means to walk around: In other words - ponder the
path of your feet!

Take some time to get away by yourself, take a break from the noise and the
tyranny of the urgent, and let the Lord speak to you about the path you are on
Where are you headed?

{Prov 16:33} The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

In the OT, lots were used to determine God's will

In fact, the most well known lots were held and used by the high priest of Israel
They were called the Urim & the Thummim
They were a white and a black stone that were of identical size, weight, and
shape

They were kept in a pocket behind the high priest's breastplate

Whenever the nation needed to hear from the Lord, the leaders would come
before the high priest and phrase their question in the form of a Yes or no
answer

Then the priest would put his hand in the pocket, finger the stones, and pull one of them out.

If it was the white stone, it meant "yes"; black meant "no"

This method for determining the Lord's will was used frequently in the history of Israel

This practice was carried on with other lots for the common people as they would seek the Lord's direction for important decisions in their lives

They didn't possess the counsel of God's word in the fullness we do today and they didn't have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to direct them, so they depended on this form of discovering God's will for their lives

Solomon's point is that direction in life has to be sought from God, not magic or chance

Yes the people used lots - but they needed to remember that it was not the lot that was answering them - it was God using the lot!

The last time we see lots used is in Acts 1 (26) and the selection of Matthias as the replacement for Judas

It came down to 2 men, and so the apostles cast lots to discover God's will

But as we read on further in Acts, we discover that Matthias was probably not God's choice -

Paul was the one Jesus intended should replace Judas

And it's here that we see a bit of the failure of the apostles in understanding the new role of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the leadership of the church

Only Jesus could appoint an apostle - this was not their job - they should have waited

But they saw a need and set out to fill it

Rather than depending on the Holy Spirit to lead them, they took matters into their own hands

The church has continued to follow in the path of the apostles down through the centuries in this

Seeing a need - they look around for the most likely solution, implement it, and then ask God to bless their endeavors

But the day of this kind of leadership passed with the coming of the Holy Spirit

We don't need or use lots today

When we see a need - we pray, and ask the Lord to bring the answer

When He reveals it, it's our duty to faithfully respond and step forward

{Prov 21:5} The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

Planning is an essential part of living skillfully

God wants us to live productive lives - it was part of the creation mandate given to Adam and Eve

They were to be fruitful, and to multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it

They were given the task of tending and keeping the garden

While sin has hindered man's labor, it has not nullified his mandate

{Eph 2:10} For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God designs that we live productive lives!

But if we are to be productive, we cannot live haphazardly or carelessly

The productive life is an organized and planned life

Now when I say that, I don't want to give the impression that that means we all need to run out and get day planners or Palm Pilots

Being organized means different things for different people

But the point is that there must be a *planning component* to our lives

Look at v. 5 again . . .

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

We have 2 people presented to us here

1) *The Diligent Planner* - she has taken the time to think ahead and decide what it is she wants to accomplish

Then she's determined what it's going to take to get her there

Her diligence is seen in her planning and plotting things out and taking care of the intermediate steps

The result - A successful outcome!

2) *The Hasty* - this is the guy, who instead of attacking life, let's life mug him

He's hasty because everything is always the last minute, or even late and he plays catch up

This style of living will always be plagued with lack

{Prov 23:4} Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease!

{5} Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

This is just good simple advice - Don't overwork!

Especially don't overwork for the end of amassing wealth

Because wealth ends up being an elusive goal

Oh sure, you might be able to put away a couple million or billion - but what it was you thought wealth would garner you - DIDN'T!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Have you ever wondered why it is that baseball players who make a million a year want to renegotiate their contract for more?

Or why CEO's who make \$14 million a year move to another company so they can make \$18 million?

Or why some banker who is worth \$30 billion is involved in so many intrigues and schemes to get more?

It's because *more* is the goal ; It's not about wealth - it's about *more* wealth!

But the thing about *more* - there's always *more*!

It's an illusive goal you can never quite attain no matter how close you get

Work is a part of life - but *overwork* is a *misapplication* of work

It's too many hours - too much effort

It's spending more of life in our work than we need to or should spend

Question: Do you live to work, or work to live?

Life is *not* for experiencing *work* - it's for experiencing *God!*

Our work, our career, our vocation, is merely one of the venues God has given us for encountering Him

{Prov 23:24} The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him.

{25} Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice.

{26} My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.

{27} For a harlot is a deep pit, And a seductress is a narrow well.

{28} She also lies in wait as for a victim, And increases the unfaithful among men.

V. 26 is the key for understanding Solomon - the issue is this: Who will your model in life be?

The godly or the worldly?

I shudder when I think about the role-models that are thrust before the youth of today

Whether we're talking about popular music, Network TV, sports, or even the highest office in the land - we see little that is commendable

It used to be that the office of President was the highest aspiration and example for youth

The man who sat there was supposed to be the epitome of what the people valued

Apparently, according to the polls - he does!

It seems that with rare exception, the role-models that are presented to youth today are people who have given themselves to what is base and debauched

Can we echo Solomon's word? "Let *me* be your role model. Follow *my* example"?

By God's grace, we should strive to be worthy of emulation by our children

{Prov 24:6} For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

Any general going to war better have a plan or he is going to be hurt!

And if the general thinks he can take no counsel but his own, he is a fool!

In the same way, in order to live successfully, we need the input and counsel of others

Just like a general waging war, we may not agree with everyone's input

But at least listening to it will help us arrive at a solid conclusion

Everyone of us face critical decisions, major life choices that demand that we secure the wisdom of others who may be more wise than we are

These would be decisions like marriage, career, major purchases, investments, and such

All too often, people think they need no one else's help - they can go it alone

But they soon discover a little input from someone who's already been there would have saved them a world of hurt

If you are facing a critical decision, the outcome of which is going to effect your life for months or years to come - find other men and women who have some experience and who have demonstrated wisdom in the living of their own lives to give you some assistance and guidance

Solomon's son Rehoboam blew it badly in this regard

After his rise to the throne, the people came to him and asked that he reduce the tax burden his father had levied on them for his expansive building projects.

Now that Solomon was dead, and the projects were finished, the need for such heavy taxes was past

The older and more experienced court counselors advised Rehoboam to listen to the people and repeal the tax

But Rehoboam went to his boyhood friends, his new cabinet, and asked what they thought

Their political philosophy was no doubt sound - but it failed to take into account the real world - and they advised Rehoboam to not only not repeal the tax, but to threaten even greater levels of taxation

He listened to these foolish political pundits, and the result was civil war!

Get advice from wise and proven counselors - not unproven fools!

{Prov 24:27} Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house.

The translation of this verse almost obscures the meaning - which is this: Do the first things first!

Don't get ahead of yourself - make sure you have a good foundation before you start building the rest of the house

There is a very practical way this verse applies itself to our current Sunday series on marriage; and it is this:

The best time to do the groundwork for marriage, is before you've even become romantically involved with someone

Understand the issues of marriage; it's purpose and goal, the roles of the husband and wife, the importance of communication, the challenges to intimacy

Build a solid foundation of knowledge about these things before you get involved with someone so you can better filter your relationship through these issues

She might look like Barbie, but does she have a brain?

He might look like Ken, but can he do anything other than tie a sweater around his shoulder and carry a tennis racket?

Is this person you're attracted to headed in the same direction you are?

{Prov 27:23} Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, And attend to your herds;

{24} For riches are not forever, Nor does a crown endure to all generations.

{25} When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,

{26} The lambs will provide your clothing, And the goats the price of a field;

**{27} You shall have enough goats' milk for your food, For the food of your household,
And the nourishment of your maidservants.**

Very simply - keep on top of things!

Mind your business well!

Be faithful with what you have and stop wasting time grieving over what you don't

When we take time to plan, then diligently work our plan, we'll find that *in* time, it will bring a reward

On the opposite side of Planning and Diligence is a guy Proverbs calls the "Sluggard"

{Prov 6:9} How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?

{10} A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep;

{11} So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.

The sluggard is identified by his failure to plan and work
And the result of such a lifestyle is poverty

{Prov 19:24} A lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

The sluggard is someone who doesn't finish what he starts

{Prov 20:4} The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.

{Prov 22:13} The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!"

{Prov 26:16} The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.

In other words, the sluggard always has an excuse for his laziness

Like everyone else, HE KNOWS HE SHOULD WORK, but he doesn't want to
So he comes up with plausible excuses for *why* he can't work

It's winter - there's a lion in the street

And no matter who rebukes or confronts him, he's got an excuse that he deems is good enough to rationalize his indolence

Talk to any transient, and they'll tell you a story that will have you running to the depths of sympathy

But truth be told, for the vast majority, they are just excuses!

Don't confuse the *circumstance* of being homeless and transient with laziness

The two are not necessarily the same!

Laziness and indolence are conditions of *choice*, not circumstance

Homelessness or poverty may be only temporary conditions due to extremely adverse events

You and I cannot drive along and determine that every homeless person we see is where they're at because of indolence - because they're a sluggard

Some of them might be ex-CEO's or software engineers who suffered a layoff or buyout and in a couple years will once again be living in a posh estate in Spanish Hills

These verse are less for judging the people we see out and around the city and more for the people we shower and shave each day - they're for us - for our own tendency toward indolence

HONESTY

{Prov 10:9} He who walks with integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will become known.

This is Solomon's way of saying that honesty is the best policy

To walk in integrity means to be honest, to be true

Integrity speaks of being together, of being a wholesome one!

The opposite of integrity is *duplicitous* or *two-faced*

It's the man or woman who says one thing but does something else

They present themselves one way but are actually something very different

With the person of integrity - what you see is what you get

With the *duplicitous*, or as Solomon calls them here, the *perverse*; what you see and what you get are two very different things

Because the honest person only always tell the truth, they never have to worry later about remembering what they said

They told the truth and so in the future they never have to worry about something being "discovered and exposed"

The *perverse* spin a web of deceit that grows over time - it has too

When you tell one lie, you end up having to protest your truthfulness and tell other lies to cover the first

Eventually the weight of deceit is so great it caves in and the liar is exposed as a liar

The recent national scandal reveal that Honesty is a vanishing virtue in our culture - and that is terrifying when you realize what that means

Let's apply a principle we've already discovered tonight to this subject - let's

ponder the path of our national feet as we devalue *honesty*

When the truth doesn't matter anymore, when it is devalued and there are no consequences to lying, then we are headed surely to anarchy and chaos

Law, economics, politics, and all social relationships are bound together by an agreement to trust one another

But when we can lie with impunity, who is going to trust anyone?

Truly, we are in the death throes of the American civilization

I can say that with all certainty because while we've been witnessing the devaluing of truth for a couple decades, until recently, people at least wanted others to be truthful with them

They might lie themselves, but at least they *expected* others to be truthful

Now, the situation has changed

Now, people *expect* that businesses and politicians are going to lie to them
And what's even worse - is when it's discovered that they've been defrauded
and lied to, they don't care!

They approve of it!

The only hope of recovery is for a revival that restores our moral sanity and re-
instills a passion for and devotion to truth and honesty

**{Prov 11:3} The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the perversity of the
unfaithful will destroy them.**

This reinforces what we've just seen

{Prov 12:17} He who speaks truth declares righteousness, But a false witness, deceit.

Our speech declares whose side we are on, the devil's, who's the father of lies, or
God's

{Prov 14:5} A faithful witness does not lie, But a false witness will utter lies.

Truth telling is so important that it is included as one of the 10 Commandments

You shall not bear false witness!

We've probably all known someone who was a compulsive liar

It seems no matter what they were talking about, they had to embellish the
truth or make something up out of whole cloth

I have known several - and they give me the creeps!

Let's determine by God's grace to be compulsive *truth-tellers!*

**{Prov 19:1} Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in
his lips, and is a fool.**

It is possible to get wealth through deceptive means

Not a few con-men have been able to sucker people out of their money

But such ill-gotten gain is rarely lasting

On the scale of *value*, integrity is much more precious than physical treasure

PRIDE & HUMILITY

{Prov 11:2} When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.

Pride is the all consuming drive to have everything my way!

It's the motive and first manifestation of sin

It's the insidious desire to live with no other reference point than the self

This world, apart from God, is locked in the pursuit of pride-motivated
existence

But it's a relative pursuit - meaning that people define themselves, not by
the ultimate standard of God's unchanging righteousness, but relative to
one another

And the only way they can elevate themselves is by putting others down

So, as it says **When pride comes, then comes shame**

My pride will manifest itself in shaming you

And you, once shamed, will by pride get back and so shame me

The humble, on the other hand - don't live by this relative vying for position
They hold themselves up to the unchanging standard of God and in doing so
find permanence and stability for their lives

{Prov 12:9} Better is the one who is slighted but has a servant, Than he who honors himself but lacks bread.

The idea of this proverb is the avoid *pretension*

Forget image and position - these are all issues of pride

One of the biggest problems in so many work places is the problem of image

How many times do you hear someone say - "That's not my job." Or "I'm the boss!"

Don't let image and position alter you perception of yourself as a servant of God

{Prov 15:33} The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility.

The only honor that is worth anything is the honor God bestows

And the way to that honor is by living humbly

{James 4:10} Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

{Prov 29:23} A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.

{Prov 27:2} Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.

{Prov 16:18-19} Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

{19} Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Pride is a false lifting up - and what goes up, must come down

It's better to take the low place than to be thrust there

Jesus told the story about going to a dinner to which many others had been invited

Around the oriental table, people sat according to their importance

He said that when His followers arrived at such a fete, they should take a low place rather than a high one

Because if they took an important seat, and someone more important came, they would be asked by the host to go lower

But if they took the last seat, they could only be asked to come up!

He didn't just tell stories like that, he lived it

{Phil 2:5-7} Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, {7} but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

In teaching His followers how they were to look at greatness, he said, "Let him who wants to be great in the Kingdom of God learn to be the servant of all."

How totally opposite from the mind and sensibility of the world

The world says that image and position are everything

But the more they strive for these things, the more unhappy they are

It is only those who have died to self and it's preoccupation with pride that can find genuine happiness and peace

The happy people are not the bosses but the servants

The ones at peace are not the rulers, but those who are ruled by the good God

They are not masters, but they have One - His name is Jesus!

CONCLUSION -

Next week we'll be looking at the subjects of . . .

1. Speech
2. Emotions
3. Peer Pressure
4. Business Ethics