

Mid Week • Proverbs Topics #5

INTRO

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

1. Government & Justice
2. Family
3. And then some Miscellaneous proverbs
4. Then we will cover chapters 30 & 31

GOVERNMENT & JUSTICE

{Prov 17:13} Whoever rewards evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house.

Then look at v. 15 . . .

{Prov 17:15} He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

While these proverbs aren't aimed specifically at government or the courts, the principle they reveal speaks powerful to government and the justice system

The basis of both these proverbs is the reality of an abiding and unchanging standard of right and wrong

Right is right, and wrong is wrong

Good is good and evil is evil

Righteousness is righteousness and wickedness is wicked

Before God, righteousness is commendable and will be rewarded

But wickedness is deplorable and will come in for His condemnation

In terms of morality - the rules that govern what is right and what is wrong are *not* relative, as so many people think today

Truth is not determined by what the majority wants - it cannot be deduced from the latest poll

Truth is inexorably tied to God's character and nature

And since He does not change - truth's essence doesn't change

According to surveys taken over the last 20 years, it's been found that most Americans believe truth is relative and dependent on the situation

What's sad to discover is that among those calling themselves evangelical

Christians, the number of those who believe truth is relative as opposed to absolute is only slightly less than the public at large

But truth is truth whether any man or woman believes it or not

As Paul writes in Romans 3:4 - "Let God be true and every man a liar."

In other words - it doesn't matter if anyone believes it - God is true!

The reason why so many Americans buy into the idea that truth is relative is because it fits with the good old American philosophy of pragmatism

Pragmatism is concerned with the question - "What works?"

If it works - it's *good*
And so if it's good - it's *true* - all because it *works*
But the questions arises - "Good for who?"
And the answer comes back - like it should in a democracy - whatever is good
for the *majority*

So today, we have this debate being played out before us in the trial of Dr.
Kevorkian
We have a tape of him killing a man
And the debate is over whether or not he should be convicted of committing
murder
After all, the man had ALS - why not be merciful and euthanize him?
Pragmatism, taken to it's logical conclusion, demands the euthanization of such
people
Because their care is too costly, time consuming, and bothersome
In fact, as the governor of Colorado said about tens years ago, all the elderly
who can no longer be productive and contribute to society ought to
consider euthanasia

Once we start down this road - where will it end?
I'll tell you where - listen; following the mental framework that molds most of
those in positions of social influence and control, mankind is evolving
Since the mechanism of evolution is *natural selection* - only the fit survive
In fact, we can take control over our evolutionary advance by weeding out
those traits and weaknesses that will hinder us
So, we should start euthanizing those with handicaps, we don't want them
polluting the gene pool
Did you know that during the 50's in this country, many people who had
been institutionalized due to downs syndrome where sterilized for just
this reason?
And today, it is not uncommon in hospitals that when a malformed child is
born, it is left exposed till it expires?
Parents are having pre-natal tests done and if abnormalities are discovered
they are aborting

In Germany in the 30's, as the Nazi's drove to produce a pure Aryan race,
believing they sat at the top of the evolutionary ladder, they embarked on a
systematic campaign to remove "undesireable elements" from among them
It began with the handicap, then went to the old and infirm whose care was
draining Germany of needed funds
Then it was extended to the socially marginal ethnic groups like the
gypsies, whose presence among the Germans had always been
despised.
Once people bought in to the idea of the mass killing of whole groups of
people simply because they didn't fit in - Hitler turned the now well
tuned killing machine to a group that had been his aim from the
beginning - the Jews
Now Germans were preying on other Germans!
But Hitler had them convinced that the Jews were sub-human
And if they were left to pollute the gene pool, they would hinder Germany's

rise to it's destiny as ruler of the world and stars!
But this whole process began when the medical profession bought into the idea
that it was their duty to be the primary agents of social transformation
They were the go-to men of the new scientific age - the change agents of a
bright new day
Too bad that there were some 7 million souls who stood in the way
Science would be their ally in finding new ways to dispose of them
The current debate reminds us that history teaches us one thing: That we learn
nothing from history!
And those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them
This debate ought to make every thinking person sick to their stomach and
raise a howl of outrage that would immediately silence the whole thing
Good grief - the pictures from Auschwitz are still fresh in our minds!
Schindler's List was best picture just a few years ago!
How can people be so blind?
Dr. Kevorkian is the identical twin to Joseph Megele!
He could have fit in well at Auschwitz!
I fear Kevorkian may lose his court case but win the debate
That people will buy into the idea that what he did in offing that man and the
over 100 others he's participated in murdering- was an act of mercy and
kindness!
Already, a good portion of the medical community are arguing for euthanasia
And if they win over the majority of the public - Welcome to Nazi America!

Martin Niemoller was one of the few dissenting pastor under Hitler's Reich
He wrote these chilling words . . .
"In Germany they came first for the communists, and I didn't speak up because I
wasn't a communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't
speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came of the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me and by
that time no one was left to speak."

Getting back to these verses - evil is rewarded as good when it is called good
And good is punished when it is deemed evil
Well, sad to say, that is precisely what we see happening so much in our land today
Some macho father pats his bully kid on the back and tells him how proud of
him he is when the bully beats up a neighbor kid
Or a mother rebukes her daughter for telling a clerk at the store that she gave
back too much change
If we train our children to be dishonest and put a value on force, they will grow to
be adults with no moral bearing
And it won't be long to chaos erupts in society at large

What's doubly troublesome is when we see the courts punishing good and
rewarding evil
As when a Christian landlord refused to rent to a couple of homosexuals who

are shacking up and the courts slap her with a fine and allow the couple to live there rent free for a year!

The consolation we can have in all of the injustice we see taking place today is that there is a Just Judge who is about to convene court
His rules are perfect, His knowledge complete, and His judgment final!
He will right every injustice, and punish every evil!

{Prov 29:2} When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.

You know why?

Because the righteous ruler knows he or she has a job to do and it is to serve the people he or she is in authority over

They are a public *servant* - given the position to *lead* and *protect* those they are over

They do not look at their position as a means to their own advancement and ends

They are there to serve

It's interesting that this was precisely the model of governing that framed the founding fathers thinking

They were merchants and farmers and took on the task of framing a government

But they were anxious to return to their livelihood

In fact, George Washington tried to pattern his life after the first Roman leader - Cincinnatus

Cincinnatus was a farmer who worked his fields outside Rome

When news reached Rome that an enemy was advancing on the city, the leaders of the City went to Cincinnatus and asked him to take control to the military and lead them as tyrant

Cincinnatus accepted - dropped his pitch fork, mounted his horse, and went into the city

He was proclaimed tyrant - mobilized the army and went out to meet the enemy

Rome was victorious - Cincinnatus returned, and remained in power just a few days to make sure the city would be well governed

Then he resigned and returned to his pitch fork

Washington loved this story and made it the model of his own life and career as a military and government leader

But when the wicked rule, the people groan because they see authority as the means to their own ends

Rather than serving the people, the work to make the people serve them

They seek to get, rather than give

As we go to the polls we ought to consider *why* a person wants office

Is it because they have a vision for prosperity and the good of the people -

Or do they look at public office as a means to power and their own reward?

I don't think it's too hard to discover their motive

As you listen - ask " What is their vision? If elected, what are they saying they will strive to do?"

If there is no vision articulated, no preferable future to work toward, then why are they running?

As we consider this area of government, we need to be reminded of the power of prayer in the life of nations

Paul wrote in 1 Tim 2 . . .

{1} Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

{2} for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

We must never give short shrift to the power of prayer in changing the course of history

Proverbs 21:1 says . . .

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

As a citizen of these United States, stewardship demands you go to the polls
But as a citizen of the kingdom of God, stewardship demands you go the prayer closet

FAMILY

The subject of family gets a lot of treatment in proverbs

From the relationship between husbands and wives, to child raising, to relations with neighbors, there is wisdom here

We'll be covering just a few proverbs tonight . . .

{Prov 13:24} He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Dad- if junior asks for the car - let him borrow it, because as it says here, he who spares his rod, hates his son!

Modern parenting experts generally take great exception to the biblical teaching about child raising, specially regarding discipline.

They say that, corporal discipline like spanking is nothing but brutal pre-historic abuse that cripples a child for life.

This viewpoint is another example of the narrow minded and uniformed perspective of the critics of scripture.

Nowhere does the Bible teach blind brutality when it comes to disciplining children.

On the contrary - the emphasis is on *love*, because this is the way God disciplines His own children as it says in Hebrews 13

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights"

Question: Do we know more about raising children than God does?

Discipline has to do with correcting *character* faults in a child while there is still time to do it
Discipline isn't aimed at mere punishment
It's goal is to mold the *character* - and that's why it needs to be applied when children are young and pliable
Proverbs 19:18 reads . . .

Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction.

That last phrase is better understood like this; "do not be a willing party to his death."

In other words, if we fail to correct our children, then they may mature to be those whom the law will execute

As Warren Wiersbe says, "A vote against discipline is a vote in favor of premature death."

Proverbs 23 sounds pretty violent at first reading and it is passages like this that inflame the critics

{13} Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

{14} You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.

It's important to note that the motivation for this discipline in the first place is to protect and save the child - not harm him or her
So how could this kind of discipline be abuse?

In 13:24 we read . . .

He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly

This word "promptly" means to do so without delay

The younger the child and the longer the delay between the infraction and the discipline, the less the connection in their mind between their pain and their choice

That is why parents need to be diligent to discipline promptly

Prov 22:15 says

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

Foolishness in Proverbs is moral failure - not mistakes someone makes because they're just not paying attention

It's wrong when a parent spanks a 1 year old child for something like spilling their milk

That's not foolishness - that's the awkwardness of being a 1 year old

Foolishness is when the child is 6 and she spills her milk every night and mommy tells her to be extra careful tonight with her milk so she doesn't spill it - and she does anyway

You see, she's over the awkward stage

And she chose to ignore her mother's instructions - which is rebellion
And rebellion is one of the greatest of moral failures
This verse says that spanking will drive foolishness from a child's heart
It will cause children to make the connection between their moral decline and
the pain it causes them
It will teach them to say "No!" to foolishness
Proverbs 29: 15 says . . .

The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother

Many people take Proverbs 22:6 to be an iron-clad promise

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

But like all the Proverbs, this isn't a promise - it's a principle
Children that go astray aren't necessarily the sign that the parents failed
And parents that raise their children to the best of their ability in the nurture
and admonition of the Lord are not guaranteed that their kids will all be
missionaries and pastors
This is a general principle that speaks more to the character of parenting than
anything else

In fact, the words Solomon employs in the proverb are rich with imagery
There is an old adage that goes "As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined"

That is precisely what Solomon is saying here

When the gardener planted the trees around here - he put in poles and guy
wires

He had to because the winds blow pretty strong in the afternoon and at
several tiems of the year.

When those trees are young, they need lots of support

The gardener will come and lop of a branch here and there

He'll even put a support pole under some branches if they need it - all while
the tree is young

But as it grows and takes direction from it's supports, it gets stronger and
healthier

Eventually the time comes to cut away the supports one by one till the tree
is standing on it's own

And when it is mature, it will produce fruit, which is able to reproduce
other trees

Proverbs 22:6 is this picture - it means that parents are to provide the support a
child needs to grow up strong and healthy - in body, soul, and spirit

The more they mature, the more the supports are cut away until they are able to
stand on their own and reproduce a life of fruitfulness

What's sad is that many parents have bought into the world's idea of parenting
which is the exact opposite of this

The world says - don't stifle your young child's spirit

Let them explore and do what they want

Baby proof your house so they can't get into anything and let them be
unrestrained in their personal expression and exploration

Never rebuke or correct because that is a negative influence that will hamper their self-esteem!
But then as the child emerges into adolescence and their behavior becomes more and more rebellious and destructive, and because of their size and age more dangerous, parents start to clamp down
This only inflames the rebellion of the teen and causes them to become more obnoxious and hurtful
The Bible gives the picture of more to less control
The world says less to more
You chose!

{Prov 16:31} The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness.

Very simply - while our age values youth more than anything, as believers who follow the way of God, we must honor the elderly
Specially those who have lived godly lives!

{Prov 21:19} Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.

Why would Solomon insert this?

Probably because of his 1000 wives and concubines, he had a few contentious women in the harem, and they made life miserable for everyone around them

This verse is a reminder

It reminds a man to take a clear headed look at his prospective wife
Don't let physical beauty blind you - is she a shrew - is she contentious?
If so - drop her like a hot rock!

But I think it also reminds women to check themselves and their attitudes

While women aren't the only ones who can be negative, they are better at it
Ladies - be on guard against slipping into a negative, criticizing, and petty mode

MISC. PROVERBS

{Prov 20:1} Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Now, while many use this verse to rail against alcohol, we need to be more temperate

You see, Solomon is not saying "Drink no alcohol."

On the contrary, what he is arguing for is being temperate!

People generally didn't drink water in the ancient world - it wasn't safe unless it was coming out of a spring

They drank wine and the various kinds of ale or beer that were made from grain

What Solomon is saying is be careful of consumption because this will effect your health and your life

Don't become a slave of your belly to either food or drink!

{Prov 21:13} Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.

Keep yourself tender and show mercy to those in need - be on guard against a hardened heart

{Prov 29:18} Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

You might be more familiar with it as it is translated in the KJV

"Where there is no vision, the people perish"

But the NKJ brings out the right flavor of the words

No verse is so telling to our time than this

When "revelation", meaning the word of God, is missing, people have nothing real and substantial to base their lives on

So they take polls and determine what's right and good by personal desire and whatever the majority holds

It's not long till the end when this is the case

Society will lose the common glue that holds it together and everyone will do what is right in his own eyes

Chaos - ruin, death

But when the law of God is the order of the day - life is sweet and good because things operate as they were designed to.

CHAPTER 30

Vs. 1-4

We don't know who Agur was, but he was a man recognized for his wisdom

So his thought were included in this book

He begins with a statement of tremendous humility

The more he had learned, the more he realized how little he knew, which is a sure sign of real wisdom

Vs. 5-9

What great counsel - give me just what I need!

Not too much so I forget about God / not too little so that I doubt His love

Vs. 10

A servant stands or falls *to* his master - therefore it is folly to criticize a servant to his master

Application: Don't complain about others to God or to anyone else

Vs. 11-14

These verses describe the 4 faces of arrogant pride - The arrogant are:

- 1) Rebellious against authority
- 2) Self-righteous
- 3) Self-seeking
- 4) Greedy & corrupt

Agur says that there are periods when a whole generation of people will be marked by this kind of behavior

Vs. 15-16

These verses are tied to vs. 11-14;

Just like these things are never satisfied, so pride is never content - it always wants more of whatever it wants

It is a moral cancer that eats and eats until it has consumed all there is

Vs. 17

Rebellion leads to ruin. Rebels will not prosper!

Vs. 18-19

"3, and 4" is one of the ways the Hebrews conveyed a sense of poetry

Synthetic parallelism

Now, have to say - commentators are universally stumped by Agur's words here

Just what does he mean? How is this wisdom?

Can't say for sure but I think what he is doing is saying that there are some things that cannot be reduced to a formula

Wisdom cannot pierce the veil of mystery that surrounds some things

Life is dynamic and changing - we don't live in a fatalistic universe where everything is already played out

So wisdom dictates we remain flexible and remember that life will throw us an occasional curve

We have to look to the Lord and live in faith when these curve balls come

Vs. 20

Sinners are blind to their own sin

Vs. 21-23

Living in a fallen world means that sometimes things will be out of place

Here are 4 of them = things that ought not be - but sometimes are

Remember - this isn't the best of all possible worlds - but it will be!

Vs. 24-28

God has given all living things the instincts and traits necessary to their survival

If God has done that for the animals - how much more those created in His image?

Vs. 29-31

These are all things that move with majesty and a sense of regality

The idea here may be that Agur is making connections between things in nature

Trying to study the world and nature to see the fingerprint of God

Indeed - nature is a living picture that speaks to us of Him

Vs. 32-33

STOP! Look at yourself! Make corrections lest you fall.

CHAPTER 31

Finally, we have the words of the mother of King Lemuel

Who Lemuel was, once again we are clueless

But his mother had a lot on the ball and she did a good job of training him in how to rule, not only his kingdom, but his own house and life

Vs. 1-7

Men in positions of power have to watch out for two things - women and wine

Both can distract a ruler from his duty of serving the people

And since power attracts both women and those who want to insinuate themselves into the king's favor he needs to be on guard

Vs. 8-9

The king needs to be careful to use his position for those who have NO position

This is the test of a good ruler - he takes the cause of the powerless as his own

Vs. 10-31

Remember, Lemuel's mother taught him these things!

She was giving him a checklist to use in selecting a wife

And if he followed this, it's clear he never married!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

These things are obviously a description of Superwoman - even she couldn't have done all this

This is the picture of epitome of woman

And far from the weak, wimpy, milk toast hag that most of the world thinks of when they think of the biblical woman - this is a gal with some real spunk and pluck!

How to use this list:

Don't copy it slavishly

Look for the principles it reveals

And ask the Lord to work them into your life