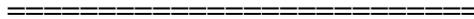


Daily Devotions In Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is a very unique book in the cannon of Scripture. It is a collection of proverbs or sayings that reveal a truth or good piece of advice. In the book of proverbs we have a collection of these principled sayings, many of them penned by Solomon, that help us in our pursuit of wisdom and how to practically live out our faith. In some of my older Bibles I have many proverbs underlined and highlighted reminding me of some of the verses that have made a memorable impression upon my life.

In the article I have written I've picked out some of my favorite Proverbs and written a short devotional to help grow and encourage our daily walk with Christ. My hope is in reading these proverbs and devotions, you will develop a desire to go through this wonderful book of the Bible and begin underlining passages that impact your life as well.



Day 1 Delicious or Despised? Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

If you are anything like me in the morning, one of the things you look forward to at the start of your day is nice cup of coffee. My limit is usually just one cup. I do, however, look forward to that cup and have that familiar craving for it in the morning. For you it might be the very same way, when you wake up in the morning it is coffee that you crave. For others it might be you can't stand the smell, taste, or even the mention of the word but you understand what it is to crave something be it a slice of pizza, country style steak, or chocolate pie.

To desire or crave something is to want it desperately. It is a consuming feeling that pushes us to obtain that item at great cost. It is also, in many ways, the opposite of despise. To crave something you pursue it and look forward to obtaining it. To despise something you want to have absolutely nothing to do with it.

Here in Proverbs 1:7 Solomon begins writing these wise sayings and ends his introduction with a simple statement concerning the wisdom of God and those that are fools. He states that the fear of the Lord (everything wrapped up in our awe inspired worship, adoration, love, and obedience of the Lord) is the beginning of wisdom. This includes wisdom and instruction as they are pathways to having a proper fear of the Lord.

Solomon contrasts this by saying that a fool despises those things that lead to a healthy fear of the Lord, wisdom and instruction. We can gather from this that the pathway to foolishness or fear of the Lord begins with what we crave and despise.

If a heart craves the things of God and desires instruction, teaching, wisdom, understanding, and things that are pure and just and holy then that pathway will lead to a healthy and holy walk with God, one that will be blessed and filled with joy. However, if one craves the things of this world

that are sinful, the love of money, the love of lust, the love of lies, the love of ungodly entertainment, and so on then their pathway is also outline as it will lead to foolishness.

The question we must ask is what is delicious and what is despised in my life? Do you love to learn more about God and His Word? Are things that are genuinely good something that excites your mind and brings blessings to your heart?

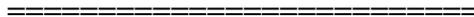
How about the things that you know are wrong? Are they what you pursue?

Fathers and mothers what are you encouraging your kids to love? Is it wisdom and understanding or ever present foolishness of this world?

What do your friends see you crave? Is it the knowledge of God or the filth of sin?

Let us crave what is good and proclaim the excellence of the riches of Christ! Let us tell the world of the greatness of the knowledge of God!

“Lord help me to have a desire and longing for Your wisdom and knowledge. I confess that there are so many times that I tasted of the fruit of foolishness and been lead astray from the path of wisdom. Help me to pursue a pathway that leads to you each day that I may be wise and help lead others to you.”



Day 2
Reaction Means Everything
Proverbs 9:8 (ESV)

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.”

My wife is a big fan of America's funniest home videos. We have a pretty good supply of episodes on Netflix so anytime we want a laugh we can put on an episode and get a good chuckle. One of the episodes I remember was when they put on videos where babies were being given different types of baby food and their reactions were hilarious. A mother would shovel in a spoon full of strained peas and the baby would look like it had been given a mouthful of dirt.

Those videos were all about reactions just like this proverb. Here Solomon warns his son about who to and not to reprove. To reprove in this verse simply means to rebuke, disagree, or criticize a person's actions. It would be like someone confronting someone about a shady business practice or talking to someone about how they treat their family and friends poorly. The scoffer or mocker as it is in other translations is one who reacts poorly. A scoffer is basically a person living whichever way they think is best and most often refuses to live by any wise principle. They are quick to offer criticism but refuse to listen to any correction that might be given hence Solomon says that they will hate whoever rebukes them.

A contrast is drawn with the wise man. A wise man will be reproved and in turn will love the one who has brought correction. The picture that is drawn here is of one who desires to live his life in

the best way possible and when someone points out a flaw he is grateful that someone has pointed it out to him so that he can correct it.

This proverb has a dual lesson for us. One is about how we interact with others but also about who we are as individuals. If we were truly honest with ourselves would we be scoffers or wise?

If someone corrects you how do you react? Youth, when your mom or dad tries to correct you what is your reaction? Do feelings of hate come forth or gratitude?

Are you a person others avoid telling anything to because of the way you react? Is your tendency thoughtful contemplation of what someone says, or anger because someone thought you were doing something wrong?

(By the way here's a test to see if you have scoffer-like tendencies. When you look at other people do you think "they can learn a lot from me" or "I wonder what I can learn from them." A wise person seeks to learn a scoffer seeks to point out flaws.)

Let us be ones who can be reproved, instructed, and corrected that our lives might be better for it. Let us not forget that is exactly what God does to us throughout our lives by the Holy Spirit as He works to make us more and more like His Son Jesus Christ. Let us be ones who love those who bring correction to our lives.

Remember reaction is everything.

"Father thank you for correcting me and for bringing others into my life to correct and reprove my behavior. Help me to never be one who hates correction but that embraces the chastening words of your Holy Spirit, Your Word, and those friends You bring into my life who show me the error of my ways."

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Day 3
Roses or Refuse?
Proverbs 12:26

"One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray."

In the poem "No Man is an Island" John Donne Poem writes

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main*

One of the points of the poem is to speak about how we are all interconnected in life. That no one exists completely separate and apart from one another. Proverbs 12:26 also reminds us of that. Solomon writes about the righteous, the wicked, and the influence they have on their neighbors.

He states that the righteous are a guide to their neighbors (someone that is helpful) while the wicked lead them astray.

The truth that is present here is that our lives affect others. The way we live and how we interact with others matter greatly, so much so that God's Word says that we will either guide or lead astray those that are closest to us.

A picture that came to mind is a stinky garbage can and a bed of roses. Both of these things can be found at your house but they effect your neighbor greatly. Both smells will effect your neighbor however one will bring compliments the other will bring complaints.

In the same way our lives can be like sweet smelling roses that bless, encourage, and uplift our neighbors or our lives can be like foul smelling refuse that taints our neighbors with the same wretched smell.

What kind of an influence are you? Are you a guide that is helping those around you towards a better relationship with God? Do you encourage others around you with uplifting words of faith and truth? Are you one who is a guide on the path of righteousness or are you one of the many distractions that tempt people away from God?

Back in high school when I was really beginning to really grow in my faith there was an upper class man that was in my Sunday school class I really looked up to. He went to the local Christian school and had strong faith and great personality. I found myself sitting with him many Sunday mornings during Sunday school and during Wednesday night youth. He wasn't a teacher or mentor to me in any formal sense but by his life I was guided and helped in my walk with Christ.

How about you? Where are you going in your life? Would others be led toward God or toward sin by the way you live?

Remember, you influence more people than you realize.

“Lord thank you for the Godly influences that you have placed in my life that have guided me in the paths of righteousness. Help me to also be that guide to others that would help draw closer to You. Bring to mind any sinful way that I may have let creep into my life that I might seek You for cleansing and forgiveness.”

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Day 4
What Does Your Tongue Taste Like?
Proverbs 16:24 (ESV)

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”

Words are powerful. If we look back in the annals of history many of the most important events are intimately connected with words. America's independence was declared through the

Declaration of Independence a document signed by many of our founding fathers. The rights of free men were first insured and brought into law in 1215 with the signing of the Magna Carta a document written in Latin and signed by King John of England. In a little over two months we will celebrate the incarnation of Christ as He entered the world and Scripture records it this way *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,”* (John 1:14a)

The power of words cannot be overstated therefore this proverb should be vitally important to us. In it Solomon states that gracious or pleasant words are good for both the body and soul. He was simply stating the power that a pleasant word has to encourage and uplift someone and that words have the power to drastically effect another individual.

This should make us pause and think. Because we know that the opposite of this proverb is also true that unpleasant words can tear down someone and hurt them. This means that we have all be entrusted with a very powerful instrument, our voice. Words cost nothing, our speech is protected by the first amendment therefore God has placed us in charge of one of the most powerful forces on the planet, speaking.

With your voice and the words you speak you can build confidence, self esteem, a clear picture of who God is and the plan that He has for someone's life and bless someones soul and body. With that same voice we can tear someone down utterly and mare their picture of who God is and just who a Christian is supposed to be.

What we are confronted with is a question of how responsibly have we used this great gift God has given to us?

Youth what type of words have you spoken to others at school this week?

Husbands and wives how have you done speaking with each other and your children? Children and youth how has your communication been with your mom and dad?

How about at work or in social gatherings? Have others left you with a sweet taste in their souls from the words you have said.

Does your tongue taste like honey from the words you have been speaking.

This proverb is a reminder from God to us that our words are powerful and have the potential to do great good. What we should ask is how much good are we doing with our voice?

Contemplate in your heart about the number of compliments you give in a day to those that are around you. It is a small number or big? It might be better to ask yourself if compliments come easily to you or are you so stingy with them that your mind has forgotten how to form them?

I've known individuals that regardless of how poorly you may be dressed or how poor a situation may be they come in with words that uplift your soul and renew your strength. That is what we should strive for an attitude and personality that looks to uplift regardless of circumstances.

Now I wish to be clear. I don't think we should be ones that simply go around flattering everyone with grandiose compliments that inflate people's egos. I do think all Christians should be known as ones who lift up others with their words rather than cutting people down. Insults, scathing remarks, and belittling comments are not the way we show Christ's love in this world.

So if you had to give your words a flavor what would it be? Honey, sugar, maybe maple syrup? Or would the honest answer be lemon juice or coffee grounds?

What about giving your comments a description. Would you say they are like 2x4s and nails used to build someone up? Or are they a wrecking ball or a sledge hammer used to knock others down?

Let us strive to use the gift of words that God has given us to the absolute best of our ability and may the taste of honey be always on our tongues.

“Lord let me use my words wisely. I confess that so often I use my words destructively to harm others rather than for your glory and honor. Help me to control my tongue that I may represent you properly in my life and bring you glory and honor with all that I say.”

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Day 5
Beware the Blinding Power of Envy”
Proverbs 23:17

“Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.”

Envy is defined as desire to have a quality, possession, or other desirable attribute belonging to another. It is a dangerous thing and unfortunately it is pushed upon us in many facets of our society.

Advertisers try and make us feel envious for new products so that we will go out and buy them. Clothing manufacturers try and make us envy the model wearing their clothes so we will buy them. Rock stars, movie stars, and sports celebrities live lavish lifestyles that make us envious to be like them. All the while all that envy does is make our lives miserable and it blinds us to the reality that none of the things we envy will bring us joy or holiness.

Interestingly, this chapter in Proverbs begins with Solomon instructing his son on what to do when he sits down with another ruler. Solomon in much of this book is preparing his son for life he will lead as king. That being said this particular verse gets another dimension added to it as it is looked through the eyes of a king. The eyes of a king would see the prosperity not only of individuals but also of kingdoms and nations.

The teaching is that the most important thing to seek after whether you are a king or a regular person is the fear of the Lord. Solomon knew this to be true that when a king or person seeks after the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding from God and their life is lived in such a way that it pleases God then God will bring about blessing and provide that which is most needed.

Our sinful nature likes to turn this around. It tells us to look out and be envying something like a new car, a better job, or some material possession. This skewed logic then says that these things are good and God should give them and if He doesn't we should do everything in our power to get them because that will bring us peace and joy and prosperity. This is what brings so much trouble into the lives of many.

The most important thing in our life is living for God. In making Him first in our life in all things and bringing glory to His name. We are to seek Him and His will and when we do God will then bring us the desires of our heart.

The lie of Satan and this world is that having stuff, committing sin, and living like someone else will make us happy and content. The truth is that no amount of stuff, sin, or living lavishly will ever satisfy because it never has and it never can. The matter of having a contented life is matter of the heart and the only one Who can satisfy the heart is Jesus Christ.

That is why Solomon warned his son to avoid the danger of envy for things would never satisfy only God could.

How about your heart? Does it desire something that cannot satisfy? Does it long for something that will never bring fulfillment. Remember the lie of envy is that whatever you are seeking after and longing for will be enough. The truth of the promises of God is that He is and will always be enough.

“Lord God help and still my heart from envying all the things of this world that will never satisfy. Open my eyes that I may see the brevity of pleasure that material things bring and the everlasting joy that you provide in Christ. Help me do as was commanded so long ago to continue in the fear of the Lord all of the day.”