

September 26, 2021

“Acting with Discernment”
Lesson 4 of Unit

Proverbs 25:1-10

Intro

One admirable quality in those who lead (whether it’s in church, in government, or at the job) is the ability to make good decisions. Leaders who make good decision make it easy, even desirable, for those under their leadership to follow them.

Today’s passage from Proverbs begins, “These are the proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah.” Solomon is reputed to be the wisest man who ever lived, and at least 500 of his sayings are contained in the book of Proverbs. The men of Hezekiah show respect for Solomon’s words, as they “copied” them. These words had value in their instructive points. Some scholars have suggested that this section is intended for those who rule in the royal court; many of the proverbs speak directly about proper actions of the king. If so, this section may have been copied by Hezekiah’s men as a sort of guidebook for Hezekiah on how to rule well and wisely.

Read Proverbs 25:1-10

1. vs. 2: This verse is saying the different things in comparing the same elements

God conceals, kings search out

God is God; His reasons for what He does aren’t always obvious to humanity

Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave Him more wisdom than anyone has ever had

For kings, it is a glory to them / for them to search things out, to find the answers

This seems true of almost all people, whether kings or not

2. vs. 3: This verse connects to vs. 2 in the idea of “searching”

Kings may search as high as the heavens, or as deep in the earth as they want

This idea is contrasted with the hearts of kings being “unsearchable”

This may be especially true of Solomon, whose wisdom was so profound

The ability to govern well ultimately comes from God

The king who searches for truth from God will be on solid ground

Recognizing the difference between God and humanity is a good starting place

3. vs. 4: Vs. 4 starts an analogy that will conclude in vs. 5

Dross is the impure elements that surround the silver

The silversmith must heat the silver to separate the dross from the silver

The separated silver is the quality materials the worker needs

4. vs. 5: This verse is the conclusion of the analogy begun in vs. 4
Removing the wicked from the king is like removing the dross from the silver
A king surrounded by wicked counselors makes bad decisions
Rehoboam in I Kings 12:8-15
The removal of the wicked leads to blessings for the king
“His throne will be established through righteousness”
I Cor. 15:33 says, “Bad company corrupts good morals”
This verse is true of kings as well as common people
5. vs. 6: Again, two verses go together; here, vs. 6 and 7
Vs. 6 is a “what not to do” verse
“Don’t exalt yourself in the king’s presence”
Anyone who tries to make themselves look better is using the wrong tactics
It might work in human terms, but it’s contrary to God’s way
We are never to seek our own promotion, but let someone do it for us, if at all
This is a challenge for all of us, as we desire to be noticed and appreciated
6. vs. 7: Vs. 7 is the “why not to do it” answer to vs. 6
The “king” will promote one that he sees doing well
One who does well will be seen and recognized
(Verse that says “Righteousness is its own reward?”)
The contrast here is what happens if someone exalts himself before the king
“than for him to humiliate you...”
Getting humiliated when you thought you were doing well is deflating
Remember Haman in the story of Esther
Jesus may have had this very psalm in mind in the story he tells in Luke 14:7-11
He cautions people to be humble, to not “exalt” themselves
Sit at the lower seat, and wait to be called up
Don’t sit at the upper seat, and be humiliated when asked to move
7. vs. 8: The last phrase of verse 7 (“What you have seen with your eyes”) seems to fit better with vs. 8
That phrase and the first part of vs. 8 warn us to be cautious, not to jump to conclusions
The idea here is “taking someone to court”, that is, of judging them quickly
“What you see” may not always be the exact truth of the situation
Acting slowly and cautiously is safer, and helps up think the best of a person
instead of the worst
This verse also reminds us that we are to be careful about putting ourselves in
any situation that could be misinterpreted
The end result of this situation is a bad one
“when your neighbor humiliates you”
If one makes a false accusation, they will be humiliated when the truth
come out

8. vs. 9: This verse is similar to vs. 8

There is a contention between neighbors

However, this one seems to be a private problem rather than one taken to court

This verse argues for going to a neighbor directly if there is an issue

Whatever the problems/criticisms are, they are to be kept in confidence

Spreading information is not the right approach spiritually

It will not help in resolving the issue

It will likely damage the reputations of the talker and the talked-about

Jesus speaks of this type of situation in Matt. 5:22-26 and Matt. 18:15-17

9. vs. 10: Vs. 10 shows the consequence of betraying a confidence

The speaker will be shamed

The speaker will get a bad reputation that they will never lose

It's been said that character is built one brick at a time

It takes lots of repeated actions to develop and solidify one's character

It's also true that one bad action/choice destroys a lot of bricks!

This verse, like vs. 7-8, encourages us to go slowly in our speech about others

Application: This passage has been about discernment, which is a characteristic of wisdom. A person who has developed discernment considers the true nature of situations and makes good judgments about them.

Here are the five principles of conduct presented in today's lesson:

1. Let God be God, and man be man. Having a submissive attitude toward God and a recognition that He is wiser than we are is needed.
2. Good companions encourage righteousness. Do what is needed to rid yourself of evil influences. Maintain righteousness through good companions.
3. Have a genuine humility of heart and spirit. Let praise of you come from others.
4. Don't jump to conclusions. Seeing isn't always believing! Have a nonjudgmental heart.
5. Keep confidences. Keep criticisms private. Respect the dignity of others, even when they have done something worthy of blame.

Prayer: Father God, help us to follow the wisdom You've provided us through Solomon's words. Help us to strive to gain the qualities that reflect Your heart and character. Forgive us for the foolish ways we act toward others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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