

## “Like a Gold Ring in a Pig’s Snout...”

Selections from Proverbs

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There is the path of wisdom, and the path of folly. That’s what we talked about last week. We all face choices, day in and day out, about how we are going to live our lives. “Wisdom is calling out in the street,” we heard last week, yet we humans aren’t very good at always *heeding* the voice of wisdom, are we? How many times have *you* gotten yourself into trouble, because you chose a path that wasn’t very wise? We’ve got a whole book of the Bible whose purpose is to help us learn how to make wiser choices – something we should do *all* the time, perhaps especially during this season of Lent.

Last week, as I talked about the path of wisdom and the path of folly as it is laid out in the opening chapters of the book of Proverbs, there was one topic I watered down quite a bit because of all the young children we had in worship. There are some passages in Proverbs that are addressed to young adults, young men in particular, that basically have to do with sexual promiscuity. “Why, my son, should you lose your senses with a mysterious woman?” (Proverbs 5:20) “Don’t let her take you in with her eyelashes.” (Proverbs 6:25) A young person, mature in body but not in years, might feel the rush of temptation: “Come, let’s drink deep of love until morning” (Proverbs 7:18) – but there’s wisdom in waiting. There’s a time and a place for sex – *with your spouse*. “Rejoice in the wife of your youth,” advises Proverbs (5:18). “She is a lovely deer, a graceful doe.” (Proverbs 5:19) I’m *still* watering this down; what the Bible says is actually much more explicit about the physical love between a husband and a wife. We’ll talk more about this next week, because we’re going to take a look at the Song of Solomon, which is basically a series of erotic love poems. Consider yourselves warned! If that topic is more than you can handle, well, the Methodists worship at 9:30, and they’d be glad to welcome you!

What we’re going to do today is take a quick walk through the rest of the book of Proverbs. There are 31 chapters here, full of wisdom. The proverbs of Solomon begin in chapter 10. We were told, back in 1 Kings, that “Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs.” (1 Kings 4:32) Some of those have been preserved. Apparently, during the time of King Hezekiah, roughly 250 years after the time of King Solomon, there was a group of scribes who set themselves to the task of compiling as many of Solomon’s proverbs as they could find. (See Proverbs 25:1) They basically just made a list, and it’s not in any order, it just flows, seemingly randomly, from one topic to the next. After the proverbs of Solomon, there are some “sayings of the wise,” including one man named Agur and one king named Lemuel, both of whom we know next to nothing about. The book ends with a beautiful ode that some husband wrote in honor of his utterly amazing wife. “Her value is far more precious than pearls,” he

said. (Proverbs 31:10) “Many women act competently, but you surpass them all!” (Proverbs 31:28-29)  
All you husbands out there might do well to take some inspiration from that poem and write something beautiful in honor of *your* wife, articulating all the qualities you admire and appreciate about her.

So let’s take a look at some of the specific pieces of wisdom in this book. Life today isn’t *that* different than it was three thousand years ago. Sure, we’ve got electricity and indoor plumbing, smart phones and “the cloud,” but there’s still dishonesty, greed, jealousy, anger, adultery, and so much more. Just about everything in the book is just as applicable today as it was back then. So here we go:

A wise child makes a father glad,  
but a foolish child brings sorrow to his mother. (Proverbs 10:1)

Laziness brings poverty;  
hard work makes one rich. (Proverbs 10:4)

The Lord detests dishonest scales,  
but delights in an accurate weight. (Proverbs 11:1)

A slanderer walks around revealing secrets,  
but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence. (Proverbs 11:13)

Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout  
is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion. (Proverbs 11:22)

Generous persons will prosper;  
those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:25)

Fools see their own way as right,  
but the righteous listen to advice. (Proverbs 12:15)

The Lord detests false lips;  
he favors those who do what is true. (Proverbs 12:22)

Walk with wise people and become wise;  
befriend fools and get into trouble. (Proverbs 13:20)

The naïve believe anything,  
but the prudent give thought to their steps. (Proverbs 14:15)

There is profit in hard work,  
but mere talk leads to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

Patience leads to abundant understanding,  
but impatience leads to stupid mistakes. (Proverbs 14:29)

A peaceful mind gives life to the body,  
but jealousy rots the bones. (Proverbs 14:30)

Hotheads stir up conflict,  
but patient people calm down strife. (Proverbs 15:18)

Pride comes before a disaster,  
and arrogance before a fall. (Proverbs 16:18)

Destructive people produce conflict;  
gossips alienate close friends. (Proverbs 16:28)

Wise are those who restrain their talking;  
people with understanding are coolheaded. (Proverbs 17:27)

Fools find no pleasure in understanding,  
but only in expressing their opinion. (Proverbs 18:2)

The Lord's name is a strong tower;  
the righteous run to it and find refuge. (Proverbs 18:10)

Better to be poor and walk in innocence  
than to have dishonest lips and be a fool. (Proverbs 19:1)

Wine is a mocker; beer a carouser.  
Those it leads astray won't become wise. (Proverbs 20:1)

Gossips reveal secrets;  
don't associate with those who talk too much. (Proverbs 20:19)

Strength is the glory of young men;  
gray hair is the splendor of old age. (Proverbs 20:29)

Those who close their ears to the cries of the poor  
will themselves call out but receive no answer. (Proverbs 21:13)

A good reputation is better than much wealth;  
high esteem is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1)

Don't befriend people controlled by anger;  
don't associate with hot-tempered people. (Proverbs 22:24)

Those who speak honestly  
are like those who kiss on the lips. (Proverbs 24:26)

Don't answer fools according to their folly,  
or you will become like them yourself. (Proverbs 26:4)

Let another person praise you, and not your own mouth;  
a stranger, and not your own lips. (Proverbs 27:2)

Iron sharpens iron,  
and one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

Better to be poor and walk in innocence  
than to be on crooked paths and wealthy. (Proverbs 28:6)

When the righteous become numerous, the people rejoice,  
but when the wicked dominate, the people moan. (Proverbs 29:2)

Instruct your children; they will give you peace of mind  
and bring delight into your life. (Proverbs 29:17)

Pride lays people low,  
but those of humble spirit gain honor. (Proverbs 29:23)

All God's words are tried and true,  
a shield for those who take refuge in him. (Proverbs 30:5)

This is just a sampling of the wisdom to be found in Proverbs. The question is, what do we *do* with all this? My advice: spend some time with this book on your own. You kind of have to go slowly, because each verse is often a completely different thought than the one before it. There are 31 chapters; 31 days in some months; you could make it a point to read one chapter a day. Linger over the verses that seem to speak *to you*. For each of us there will be different messages that really stand out. Some of us need to hear words about *pride*; others of us need to hear words about *anger*; some need to hear about *greed*, while others need to hear about *laziness*. There truly is something for everybody here. I don't think you can read this book and not have God pierce your heart along the way. That's all I want to leave you with today – a simple invitation: pick up the book, and *read*. *Let God speak to you*, about *your* life, to help you walk more faithfully in the path of wisdom, the way of Jesus Christ.

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