

A Little Bible When You Rise Makes a Man Healthy, Wealthy and Wise, part 2

(Proverbs 18:16-24)

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Introduction

“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise...” is not a proverb of the Bible but rather a wisdom saying often attributed to Benjamin Franklin..

In the 1735 edition of Poor Richard’s Almanac, Franklin printed the saying along with a number of other sayings that were placed in and around tide charts, moon phases, planting and harvesting seasons...

The proverbs were not taken from the Bible, and most were not even original to Benjamin Franklin himself..

In fact, this saying was about the benefit of a good night’s sleep and an early morning originated in the 1496 in a book of fishing..

The book originated in England and was called A Treatise of Fishing with an Angle...

And one of the tips of good angling was to arrive early at the body of water...

The idea was that fish were more easy to catch in low light conditions, but the book went on to say that getting up early was also good for a person's well being...

Quote...

“Whoever will rise early shall be holy, healthy, and happy.”

That saying was eventually altered and printed in another book in 1639 by John Clarke to read exactly what Franklin later printed in 1735 in his almanac.

“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise...”

And though it isn't a inspired proverb, there is wisdom in it..

The Bible affirms the need of rest..

Jesus rested while ministering on earth..

God rested on day 7 of creation..

In a fallen world, bodies wear out and get tired and need rest...

The Bible also affirms the benefit of starting your morning with the Lord..

In the book of Psalms, we find encouragement to rise early and praise the Lord...

So in a sense, we even find God's wisdom in a proverb of man...

Yet it is incomplete because the saying makes no room for God's hand in our health, wealth and wisdom..

And we know that is certainly not the case...

So as you notice in my title for Proverbs 18, I simply modified the saying to make room for God's hand in our health, wealth and wisdom..

And last we saw, the wisdom does benefit us financially and even physically...

We saw that God's wisdom about our speech can help us physically by preventing someone from punching us in the mouth...

Verse 6 says this...

6

***A fool's lips [d]bring strife,
And his mouth calls for blows.***

We also noted last week that God's wisdom tells us to work and gain wealth, but the balance to that is to not let that wealth become our security blanket in the world..

Verses 10-11.

10

***The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous runs into it and is [f]safe.***

11

***A rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And like a high wall in his own imagination.***

And we also saw the repeated theme in the book of Proverbs where God's wisdom calls us to stay humble in 12-13, followed by an interesting bit of wisdom in verses 14-15...

14

***The spirit of a man can endure his sickness,
But as for a broken spirit who can bear it?***

15

***The [g]mind of the prudent acquires knowledge,
And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.***

And we noted last week that wisdom enables a person to endure health problems and even sickness...

While people who lack wisdom and knowledge of God may suffer unbearable pain in illness and disease..

Tonight we finish out Proverbs 18, and we are going to see that a little Bible also benefits us in other ways beyond our health and wealth///

So, let's pick up in verse 16 with another benefit of wisdom that helps us see that God's wisdom promotes our kindness to others..

V. Wisdom and Kindness (16)

Let's read verse 16..

16

***A man's gift makes room for him
And brings him before great men.***

This is an unusual proverb in terms of its placement...

It appears to be a solitary statement not really connected to what comes before it or after it...

And it also unusual in what it apparently teaches...

Which at first glance seems like the endorsement of offering a bribe in order to get a meeting with important people...

Yet, we know that the Bible would never endorse such a thing...

In fact, the book of Proverbs says that people who wink and make back room deals are people to be avoided in our lives..

So what is going here in verse 16?

What wisdom is God giving us through Solomon?

Well, I think it is quite simple...

This is simply an endorsement of kindness to others in the form of giving gifts to other people...

This is even a practice of hospitality even today where a couple may invite another couple over for dinner and the guests simply bring a gift as a show of gratitude for the invitation...

In other words, a simple act of kindness out of love for your fellow man can go a long way..

It can even lead a person to being in the presence of important people..

In the book of Genesis Jacob steals Esau's blessing from their father and as a result, the 2 brothers go their separate ways for 21 years..

However, the opportunity comes for the two brothers to be united, and Jacob prepares for that meeting by preparing a gift for his brother..

Turn to Genesis 32 for a moment...

Genesis 32:9..

9 Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your relatives, and

I will [e]prosper you,’ 10 [f]I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the [g]faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies. 11 Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and [h]attack me and the mothers with the children. 12 For You said, ‘I will surely [i]prosper you and make your [j]descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.’”

13 So he spent the night there. Then he [k]selected from what [l]he had with him a present for his brother Esau: 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. 16 He delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on before me, and put a space between droves.” 17 He commanded the [m]one in front, saying, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?’ 18 then you shall say, ‘These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.’” 19 Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, “After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; 20 and

you shall say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.’” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” 21 So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.

And the hope of this plan was to let Esau know that Jacob wanted to be reconciled to him...

The gift of this livestock was simply an offer of good will and friendship despite a difficult past...

So did the plan work?

Flip over to Genesis 33:4..

4 Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, “[e]Who are these with you?” So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” 6 Then the maids came near [f]with their children, and they bowed down. 7 Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down. 8 And he said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he said, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” 9 But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have

be your own.” 10 Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, [g]for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. 11 Please take my [h]gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have [i]plenty.” Thus he urged him and he took it.

The happy ending to the story is that Esau and Jacob were able to reunite on good terms...

Did the offer of gifts change the mind of Esau?

We aren't sure, but it certainly didn't hurt to make the meeting friendly...

Great lesson for us as well as we head back to Proverbs 18:16...

In other words, a gift doesn't have to be given as a bribe as long as it is given with the right heart...

The wise men brought gifts to Jesus and they were able to see the King of kings...

We must remember that a simple act of kindness can go a long way...

But remember, we don't give with an expectation of anything...

We give with no strings attached, hoping that God would fulfill our desires...

There is much wisdom in simply being kind to others...

A second bit of wisdom in Proverbs 18 is found in verses 17-18...

I call this...

VI. Wisdom and Decision Making (17-18)

17

*The first [h]to plead his case seems right,
Until [i]another comes and examines him.*

18

*The cast lot puts an end to strife
And [j]decides between the mighty ones.*

There are times in life that we must make judgments on people, on situations, on life...

And verse 17 simply reminds us making decisions is not always easy in this world...

In verse 17, we see the dilemma of a judge...

The first one to plead his case sounds right, but then he is cross examined and he doesn't sound so right..

If you have ever serves on a jury, the first person to speak can sound real convincing until you hear the other side of the story...

The same is true in life..

Someone will come and present a situation to me, but they almost always just give their side of the story...

So, it is always important to hear both sides before making a decision about a matter...

Usually, situations are the result of sin on both sides, and you just have to figure out who was first to sin or worse to sin...

But to show how hard it can be to make judgments at times after hearing both sides, Solomon simply tells us in verse 18 that you just have to flip the coin to settle a dispute at times..

The simple wisdom principle is this...

Gather the facts before you arrive at a decision on a matter..

Listen to both sides before you render a judgment on someone or something...

Then ask the Lord for wisdom while using the Bible as your guide...

I just did a little devotional with my family and with the deacons on how to make decisions in our lives...

When faced with a decision or a choice, people often ask...

Which option is God's will for my life?

And the simple answer to that is not....

Well, just follow your gut or your heart...

When determining God's will in decision making, first ask "What does the Bible say about this?"

In other words, if one choice is going to lead you to sin, then there is no choice, you choose to obey the Word of God...

For instance, if a believer wants to know if it is God's will for marry this person or that person, and one of the choices is not a Christian, then they can't marry them since the Bible prohibits marrying an unbeliever...

But let's say that both are believers, the next question then becomes, is one of the choices more spiritually wise or profitable for me...

In the above example, lets say one of the options for a spouse is way more spiritually mature than the other one...

In that case, it isn't sin to marry either one but it may be more helpful to you spiritually to marry the amore mature one..

And then the final question if all else is equal is this...

Which choice do I prefer..

So let's use the same example of choosing a spouse...

Let's say both are Christians, both are about the same spiritual maturity...

Then the final question is which one do you want to marry...

So in terms of decision-making and trying to please God, wisdom tells us to examine all things completely and then turn to God for wisdom before making a final decision...

This leads to the final bit of wisdom in chapter 18, and we find this in verses 19-24..

I call this section...

VII. Wisdom and Relationships (19-24)

In verses 19-24, we are going to see various relationships that we have in life..

We have family relationships like that of a brother of sister addressed in verses 19-21...

We have marital relationships like that of a spouse addressed in verse 22...

We have everyday relationships with people addressed in verse 23...

And we have friendships addressed in verse 24...

So what is the wisdom in terms of our relationships in the world...

WE will start with family relationships...

Verses 19-21...

19

A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city,

And contentions are like the bars of a citadel.

20

With the [k]fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied;

He will be satisfied with the product of his lips.

21

***Death and life are in the [l]power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit.***

The most difficult relationships to mend are those with relatives...

When families fight, everyone suffers and bitterness grows..

And the reason for that is this....

God designed family to be our greatest blessing of fellowship and love and support and encouragement...

But when sinful people do sinful things to damage the family, long standing feuds are the consequence...

Take David for instance, he violated the closest family bond...

The bond between husband and wife and a consequence of his sin, family drama never left his home...

You see, when we take God's blessings like family and let our sin overturn God's original purpose, don't be surprised when you end up fighting with those who should be closest to you...

And I dont think that verses 20 and 21 are her by accident...

Verses 20-21 speak of the sins that can come from our speech...

And I think the connection is clear...

Feuds within families often begin with words...

Words of jealousy.

Words of bitterness...

Words of insult and slander...

And the wisdom of this passage seems to be this..

If you speak foolishly and carelessly and sinfully to those around you, dont be surprised how hard it will be to fix those sinful words...

Yet on the other hand...

Sweet words will reward you as well...

Verse 22 says this...

22

***He who finds a wife finds a good thing
And obtains favor from the Lord.***

Though family relationships could be a curse in your life, your marital relationship can be an equal blessing ...

To find a good wife is to find a blessing and favor from God...

To find a wife like Job's wife who told him to curse God and die is to find the curse of God..

And it needs to be said here that our marital relationship takes precedence over all our relationships in the world...

We leave our father and mother and cleave to our spouse...

This is the biblical picture of marriage and to get that leaving and cleaving wrong is to invite disaster into a marriage...

There must be a clean break in order to avoid the disaster of trying to build a home with either spouse still attached their parents....

You see, marriage is a picture of Christ and his church...

The church is the bride of Christ, and as the bride of Christ, we are wholly devoted to our husband...

WE can't have a foot in the world or in our parents and be fully devoted to our spouse...

What God joins, no one including parents, are meant to separate..

So to find a good spouse is a blessing and to cling to that spouse and forsake all others is an even greater blessing...

Another relationship seen here is found in verse 23..

23

***The poor man utters supplications,
But the rich man answers roughly.***

There are people in our lives who aren't our friends or spouse or relatives....

They are simply our acquaintances...

People that we come in contact with but nothing more...

This would illustrated by the rich man and poor man in verse 23..

The poor man isn't friends with the rich man...

He isn't family..

He simply comes to Him and asks for something, most likely money in the form of supplications..

Now the point here in verse 23 is not whether the rich man helps the poor or not, the point is the tone of his answer..

In this case, the rich man answers roughly...

In other words, wisdom tells us that we don't have to be unkind to strangers...

Whether we help or not isn't the point is that we don't have to treat others roughly in our response...

It gets back to Sunday night and the image of God that is seen in every person..

We should answer people roughly or we end up speaking roughly to God...

Even in very simple relationships that we have every day with the cashier at the store, with the customer service person on the phone, with our co-workers...

Wisdom calls us to gentleness instead of roughness...

A final relationship of this section is found in verse 24...

24

***A man of too many friends comes to [m]ruin,
But there is a [n]friend who sticks closer than a brother.***

The simple piece of Godly wisdom here is this..

Choose your friends wisely in this world...

If you aren't discerning and cautious and make friends with everyone, you will end up hurt by all the friends you have...

However, there is a need to find close friends in this world that aren't just acquaintances or family or a spouse...

David was king with a family and plenty of acquaintances but Jonathan was his close friend...

Even if we look at the life of Christ...

He had 12 friends...

But he was closet to three (Peter, James, John) and probably closest to John of all the 3..

There is wisdom in having a close friendship with other believers...

You can certainly make friends even with unbelievers, but your closet friendships need to be with other Christians who will hold you accountable and give you biblical wisdom..

Conclusion

So there you go...

Proverbs 18, a chapter of how to be healthy,
wealthy and wise in the way in which you live...

It is interesting to note Ben Franklin's connection to
this chapter, and many point to his wisdom as proof
that he got it from the Lord...

Sadly, that isn't the case...

Ben Franklin did believe in God and did see God's
hadn't in the world, but Ben Franklin doubted that
Jesus was in fact God in the flesh...

And he also never spoke of the resurrection or the
forgiveness of sins in order to be saved..

Franklin, like many of America's founding father
believed that there was a God but that he couldn't
be known in personal way...

He also thought that heaven was simply earned
through good works..

Unfortunately, those are not views of a true Christ-
ian...

Franklin may have given us fairly sound wisdom in many things in life, but he apparently never found eternal life in Christ alone...

What a shame to be so wise and knowledgeable and intelligent but miss the wisdom of repenting and trusting in Christ to be saved..

Early to bed and early to rise may make a man healthy, wealthy and wise...

But only repentance and faith alone in Christ will make a man live forever...

Let us pray.