

## W

(Proverbs 20)

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### Introduction

It is interesting to note that roads and streets has signs on them even before there were cars..

In fact, the first road sign was a sign that directed bicycle riders to slow down in pedestrian areas...

However even before that, the Roman Empire erected stone columns along their roads to alert travelers of the distance to Rome...

And even shortly after that, road signs were used to point people which direction to take at a crossroad..

However, the invention of the car led to the explosion of road and traffic signs around the world..

Anna just got her driver's permit and part of the the permit test is identifying traffic signs.

Now, we realize that signs are just that...

They are signs.

They don't have the ability to force anyone to obey them...

They just sit there and warn and advise and guide drivers..

It is up to the driver to obey the signs or experience the consequences of ignoring them..

Much of the same is true of the book of Proverbs...

The proverbs are roads signs for our life.

They don't force to obey but they offer guidance and direction and to ignore them is to endanger our lives...

As we come to chapter 20 of the book of Proverbs, we have a seen a number of traffic signs along the way...

Signs that guide our parenting, our finances, our speech, and many others..

Chapter 20 continues that theme, and since it is a rather difficult chapter to outline, I have simply broken the chapter into what I would call some road signs for life...

We are going to see 5 main road signs in this chapter that help us as we seek to follow the path that the lord has laid out for us..

The first road sign is simply this..

## **I. Swerve (1-4)**

There are things in this life that we must try to steer clear of...

Some of those things are found in verses 1-4 of Proverbs 20...

Let's read verse 1...

***1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,  
And whoever [a]is intoxicated by it is not wise.***

Denominations split over their view of alcohol..

As a kid raised in a family of Baptists, I soon learned that the difference between Baptists and Presbyterians is that Presbyterians would tell you hey in the liquor store...

So if you want to start an argument, ask someone ...

What is the biblical view of alcohol in the world and in the life of a Christian?

To avoid turning this into a message on drinking, let me give you a simple answer to that question...

#1 - The Bible never makes it a sin to consume alcohol.

#2 - The Bible always calls it a sin to be drunk.

#3 - There is freedom to consume alcohol for the Christian, but there is not freedom to be consumed by alcohol.

#4 - As a Christian, you cannot ignore the harmful effects of alcohol in history and in the world today.

That being said, verse 1 of Proverbs 20 would affirm that biblical view of alcohol...

There is no command here to not drink, but there is a clear warning that drunkenness leads to all sorts of problems..

First, too much alcohol can lead someone to be a mocker, which means that it leads people to scoff at others..

To insult others.

To taunt others..

In other words, alcohol loosens us the tongue in a bad way...

And that is probably why we read that the second danger of alcohol is that it tends to make that person a brawler also..

In other words, alcohol leads to people to run their mouth and fight with others..

So wisdom tells us that being intoxicated with alcohol is unwise..

Look, people get all up in arms over a church's view of alcohol and what is allowed and what isn't allowed..

I will simply say this..

Churches that have rigid no alcohol policies for their people go farther than the Bible goes...

And churches that refuse to teach their people of the dangers of drunkenness don't go as far as the Bible goes.

Personally, I stay away from alcohol for two reasons..

#1 - The effects of alcohol on our society are incredible.

Divorce, physical abuse, car accidents, even death are all consequences of alcohol...

And I don't want to be associated with things that bring so much harm into the world..

#2- The eyes of others around us are impressionable.

I never want to be the cause of someone becoming a drunkard.

Often times, especially in our culture, there is a tendency to flaunt our Christian freedom in regards to alcohol.

It would be tragic if in the flaunting of our freedom someone become enslaved to alcohol.

Eyes are always watching, especially those eyes in our our home and family around us.

Sometimes, it is better to give up our freedom and swerve away from alcohol than to cause a wreck by insisting on maintaining our freedom in some areas..

The second thing to avoid in verses 1-4 is the terror of the king in verse 2...

Let me read it to us..

***2 The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion;  
He who provokes him to anger [b]forfeits his own life.***

We have seen other verses in the book of Proverbs and in the book of Romans that call us to live in peace with and submit to the governing authorities.

Somewhere along the way, Christians became known more for protesting government than praying for their government...

I know folks who call themselves Christians but every conversation is going to be about anger at government...

As I have said before, I see government injustice all the time, but my responsibility as a believer is to live by the laws of the land and pray for those in positions of authority over me.

When I sent myself in opposition to the governing authorities, I put myself in a position to experience the terror of the king...

Now, the question I hear all the time is this...

What if the government passes a law forbidding you from preaching the whole word of God or what if the law simply prohibits me from obeying the Lord?

Simple answer.

When government authorities forbid me from obeying the Lord, I do not submit to them..

However, understand this.

I obey the Lord, but I still the accept the consequences of disobeying government..

In other words, I don't preach and then pull out my gun when the government arrives to arrest me.

I stand up and preach and when they come to arrest me, I go in peace and accept the consequences of my actions.

It truly amazes me how many people are ready to take on the king, even though the Bible says that the terror of the king is to be feared and avoided...

So swerve away from drunkenness and government rebellion...

A 3rd thing to swerve away from is found in verse 3..

***3 [c]Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man,  
But any fool will [d]quarrel.***

Simply put, swerve away from drama and arguments..

It is honorable to avoid quarreling..

I have a large family that we will spend a few days with at the beach in a few months...

We get along really well, but table discussions can go south really quick....

For years, I would jump in the debates and even lead them myself...

But the Lord has given me wisdom to listen way more than I talk...

I am still learning that in ministry, but I will simply say this...

It is an honorable thing to let an argument pass you by...

Fools won't ever let a quarrel pass, but wise people should..

Someone once told me to be selective with my words...

Simply put, not everything deserves a comment...

It is fine to just listen and let the moment pass.

Fools love strife, but God's wisdom calls us to stay away from it.

A 4th thing to avoid in life is found in verse 4...

**4**

***The sluggard does not plow after the autumn,  
So he [e]begs during the harvest and has nothing.***

Once again, we see the value of work in the book of Proverbs...

In verse 4, the lazy is hungry during the harvest because he didn't prepare his fields the rest of the year..

You know these people...

They don't work, but they expect to have the same paycheck as the person who does work...

And then they get mad at you because they are hungry...

We have already seen in a number of times in the book of Proverbs, but swerve away from laziness..

Work and you won't be begging during the harvest.

That leads to sign #2 in verses 5-10...

I call this sign...

## **II. Pay Attention (5-10)**

There are times when we drive that we must pay close attention to the road we are on..

I am not a big fan of driving on tight mountain roads..

We stayed at a cabin one year that was on top of a mountain outside of Gatlinburg...

The road up had no guard rails...

I was a nervous wreck going up and down the mountain...

Though we should be paying close attention any time we drive, there are times when signs alert us to look even closer at the road...

Well, in verses 5-10, wisdom calls us to look closely at situations...

I will explain as we move through these verses..

Let's begin by reading verse 5...

5

***A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water,  
But a man of understanding draws it out.***

Wisdom tells us that we very rarely understand others by what we see on the surface...

Often times, we don't know people until we are around them and talk to them more...

But we also don't know people until we grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the world..

Verse 5 simply reminds us that the heart of man is hard to get to the bottom of...

Just like deep water...

But a man of understanding is able to see a person's motivations...

For instance, we have been studying the book of Jude, which is concerned with helping us identify false teachers in the church...

As we read that book and see God's description of these men, we grow in understanding of people and even their motivations..

Simply put, wisdom helps us look closely at people and gain insight into who they are and what they do..

A second thing that we must look closely for is found in verses 6-7..

**6**

***Many a man proclaims his own loyalty,  
But who can find a trustworthy man?***

**7**

***A righteous man who walks in his integrity—  
How blessed are his sons after him.***

In the same that it is hard to see deep into a man's heart, it is also hard to find a faithful person of integrity.

The world is losing more God-fearing people every day than it is gaining...

The God-fearers of yesterday are being by the God-haters of today...

In a very real sense, people who are faithful and have integrity are difficult to find...

Look everyone claims to be loyal and faithful and have integrity, but few actually do...

Wisdom tells us this...

Look closely at people's words and match sure their lives what they say...

And final thing to pay close attention to and look closely for in the world is found in verses 8-10..

8

*A king who sits on the throne of justice  
[f]Disperses all evil with his eyes.*

9

*Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart,  
I am pure from my sin"?*

10

*[g]Differing weights and differing measures,  
Both of them are abominable to the Lord.*

As we talked about in verse 2, the world has been designed by God to exist under governing authorities..

There were kings in the world shortly after the tower of Babel in Genesis 11...

In fact, Genesis 14 describes wars between kings in the time of Abraham..

Now the role of the king is practice justice in the world by promoting good and punishing evil...

Yet, even kings are sinners according to verse 9..

Verse 10 even seems to suggest that kings often sin through bad business practices...

The differing weights and measures is an example of cheating people out of their money...

And I think we realize that greed often ruins the government official...

Greed for money and the power that goes with it...

So it is hard to find a righteous king or even a righteous man in government...

In fact, you will have to look closely to find that person as much as you have to look closely to find anyone who has integrity in the world..

What is the wisdom here?

Don't put your trust in man, even if that man is a king or high standing official in government...

Submit to him, respect him, pray for him, but never devote yourself to him...

The king is not a Savior...

Instead, the king, just like you, is a sinner in need of a Savior....

So pay close attention to who you align yourself with and put your trust in..

We will now leave road sign #2 and head to verses 11-15, where we find this road sign...

### **III. Follow Closely (11-15)**

Now that we swerved to avoid some potential hazards in life...

And now that we are reminded to pay close attention to things in the world...

We come to a sign that tells us what to do...

In other words, we have been warned, but now we need to know where to go...

And we are in luck because verses 11-12 begin a section of Proverbs 20 that gives us direction in life...

**11**

***It is by his deeds that a lad [h]distinguishes himself***

***If his conduct is pure and right.***

**12**

***The hearing ear and the seeing eye,***

***The Lord has made both of them.***

Simply put, we are to things in this life that are pleasing to the Lord...

According to verse 11, a young man distinguishes himself by his good deeds...

And the reason he distinguishes himself is that the Lord sees and hears all he does...

But not only that, the world also sees and hears what he does...

Verse 12 lets us know that people hear and see the pure and right deeds of the young man..

But that would also apply to any believer who is out doing good work for the Lord...

Hebrews 13:15-16 say this...

***15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that [d]give thanks to His name. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.***

Paul even encouraged believers to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ in the world..

Wisdom tells us to be people who do good works...

Verse 13 also tells us to follow closely in this regard...

**13**

***Do not love sleep, or you will become poor;  
Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with  
[i]food.***

In other words, wisdom tells us to go to work...

The sleepy and lazy man becomes poor..

The man who opens his eyes and gets out of bed and goes to work finds a satisfy his hunger with food.

In other words, wisdom tells us to follow closely the example of those who get out of bed and go to work each day..

A 4th way piece of wisdom to follow closely is found in verse 14...

**14**

***“Bad, bad,” says the buyer,  
But when he goes his way, then he boasts.***

Now the picture here is related to the idea of the marketplace...

People come into the market to buy something..

They are either going to use it for themselves or resell it for a profit, but they are driven by a desire to get the price lower..

And so to drive down the price, the buyer may intentionally lie about a product he wishes to buy...

In this case, he says something bad about the product..

Bad, bad...

Maybe it is bad craftsmanship, quality, etc...

His criticism of the product is meant to make the seller feel bad and lower the price..

And in this proverb, his tactic works and he purchases at the lower price and goes away bragging about his cleverness...

I think we have all heard this from time to time and maybe we have all practiced this from time to time...

So what is the Bible teaching here?

I think we are seeing a repeat of the fact that appearances can be deceiving...

What someone says in trying to get a bargain may not be true and we need to look beyond face value to see what drives their actions...

Now I want to make this note...

In a perfect world, the sellers of products would always price their products fairly...

And the buyers of those products would always make purchases based on those fair prices...

But we don't live in that world..

So how are we to view price negotiations from a biblical perspective...

#1 - We are not to be deceitful in buying or selling.

The Bible would never endorse lying to get a better price or lying to sell at the highest price.

#2 - We are to love our neighbor.

The person that we are doing business with should leave feeling good about the transaction.

How dare we call ourselves believers and yet the world sees us as con men and crooks..

There should be a joy in giving people the appropriate value of their product that you are buying...

If your conscience is hurt by such a great price, either don't buy it or pay the person what it is worth...

If your conscience is hurt because you are selling something way above its value, either don't seem it or lower the price.

#3 - We are to stay humble.

The person in verse 14 boasts about his negotiating skills...

Buying and selling and our skills at each should not be a source of pride in our lives..

To celebrate how well you did at either is to celebrate the misfortune of others...

Buy and sell, but do both for God's glory and not your own...

A final bit of wisdom to follow closely is found in verse 15..

15

***There is gold, and an abundance of [j]jewels;  
But the lips of knowledge are a more precious  
thing.***

Related to the idea of the marketplace, verse 15 reminds us that our greatest treasure is to get knowledge and wisdom from God..

Sure, jewels and gold are good, but neither compares to value of wisdom...

Would you trade the knowledge of the gospel that brought you salvation from sin for a bag of gold?

Would you give away the wisdom of knowing how to be saved for a bag of diamonds?

What value can you put on the word of God that saves us and makes us clean?

What value can you put on the knowledge and wisdom of God that came into your life and allowed you to secure a home in heaven?

Even tonight, would you trade time in God's word in the book of Proverbs for any amount of money?

I would hope not even if the one bringing the Word isn't all that great..

My prayer for my heart and for your heart is that we would see our time in the Word of God as the most valuable part of our day...

Follow closely to the Word of God and seek knowledge and wisdom and then live by it..

## **Conclusion**

Well, that gets us to halfway point in our trip through Proverbs 20...

And those are some important road signs for life to keep our lives on the narrow road that leads to life..

I will never forget the first accident I was involved in as a teenager...

I was in the car with my friend and we were on a very narrow and curvy road in Whitmire...

He was going to fast and we come to a curve and just go straight out in a field..

We didn't hit anything but it was pretty nerve wracking coming to a stop...

I will never forget what he said when we stopped..

“They need a sign about that curve.”

Guess what?

There were signs on both sides of the road that said sharp curve 15 MPH...

Guess what?

He blamed me for not warning him...

But that is how it goes in driving a car and following the narrow road of life..

God's gives us signs to keep us on the road, but it is definitely up to us to read them...

Let us pray.

#### **IV. Avoid Altogether (16-19)**

Avoid pledges 16

Avoid fraud 17

Avoid hasty decisions 18

Avoid gossip 19

#### **V. Honor Wholeheartedly (20-30)**

Honor the Lord's Provision 20-21

Honor the Lord's power 22-26

Honor the Lord's power 27-30