

Relationship Woes

(Proverbs 25:16-28)

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Introduction

The Bible is clear that God has made us relational people.

Most people are born into families, where they learn about relationships from a very young age.

Most people marry and their knowledge of relationships grows even more.

The church is certainly full of relationships.

Work also involves relationships, as does shopping and eating out and just about everything in life.

As a result, much of our time is spent interacting with other people..

And we quickly realize that relationships are difficult when everyone we meet is a sinner..

On top of that, relationships are also difficult because we are sinners as well..

So, how are we to make relationships work in a fallen world filled with fallen people?

Well God gives us much wisdom in this area in the Bible..

In fact, the second greatest command is to love one another...

And the Bible is filled with ways that we can live peacefully with other people.

Well, the book of Proverbs contains much instruction on relationships, and tonight in Proverbs 25:16-28, we are going to get some advice on relationships with others...

Now, it has been 3 weeks since we have looked at the book of Proverbs, so let's take a just a minute to set the context of this relationship wisdom..

If you look back at the first verse of Proverbs 25, you will read..

1 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.

As we talked about a few weeks back, Hezekiah was a king in Israel about 200 years after Solomon was king..

Hezekiah came to power right after the northern part of Israel had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

Needless to say, Hezekiah was trying to keep the southern part of Israel from falling next, so he tried to bring revival to the nation that was left...

In an effort to do that, Hezekiah tried to recover some of the wisdom that God had given to Solomon and then give it to the people of Israel..

So he sent his men to find and collect the wisdom of Solomon and record it for the nation to read and obey...

And what we have in Proverbs 25-29 are 5 chapters of God's wisdom given to Solomon but recorded by men who lived 200 years after Solomon.

The point of this collection is to bring revival to a nation that is in turmoil..

3 weeks ago, we looked at some wisdom principles that a nation needs when it is in trouble, and tonight we continue that on a personal level..

And the reality is this...

Nations with broken relationships end up broken nations.

When the family begins to crumble...

When people can no longer get along...

When relationships fail at the most basic level, a nation is in trouble...

Any king knows that, so Hezekiah furthers his efforts at reform by helping people simply learn how to live with one another in a peaceful way..

Now, the blessing for us is that this wisdom still applies today in our relationships..

Whether that is our relationship with our family, our friends, other believer or even the world at large..

God's wisdom in these verses will help anyone or any nation that is having relationship struggles...

Therefore, let's listen in as God speaks through His Word tonight on how to be wise in how to properly love one another..

Let's begin in verses 16-17...

I. Honey and Homes (16-17)

Verse 16..

16

Have you found honey? Eat only [k]what you need,

That you not have it in excess and vomit it.

17

***Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house,
Or he will become [l]weary of you and hate you.***

God has designed our bodies in amazing ways...

Our bodies can regulate their own heat...

Get too hot and your body sweats to cool down.

Get too cold and your body shivers in order to warm up.

There same could be said of our diet..

How many of you have told your kids, "Stop eating all that candy or you are going to get sick."

Well, there is truth in that.

In fact, the body will reach a limit in sugar consumption, and it will either make you nauseous and sick in order to get rid of some of the sugar..

Or the body will actually begin to shut down and go to sleep so the person isn't awake to keep eating more sugar..

In other words, there has to be moderation in sugar intake..

In fact, that is exactly what verse 16 teaches..

Eat only enough honey to satisfy or else you may end up sick..

And then that principle carries forward to verse 17 where a person is told to not wear out his welcome with a neighbor or else his neighbor may get sick of him..

We all know people who tend to wear out their welcome in our homes and in our lives...

Some people are just overly needy even overly arrogant to barge into our homes too frequently and then stay too long..

Clearly, the Christian is called to be hospitable and welcoming to all, but the Christian must not take advantage of very hospitable people..

Too much of a good thing makes that same thing a thing of misery...

Know when to put the jar of honey down and also know when to stop knocking on the door of a neighbor...

If you want to maintain a healthy relationship with a neighbor, be friendly but maintain a healthy distance as well..

When you force yourself on people, they often force you out of their lives..

The wise person knows it is better to be invited than to invite yourself...

A second bit of relationship wisdom is found in verse 18-20..

II. Problems and People (18-20)

In verses 18-20, we meet 3 people that we may encounter in life...

The Dishonest person.

The Unreliable person.

The Insensitive person.

Now the obvious instruction is that these people ruin relationships.

They create war and not peace with their actions.

So if Israel doesn't want to continue its downward spiral, the people of Israel must avoid being these kind of people...

But they must also do their best to avoid these types of people as well...

So, let's meet each of them beginning in verse 18..

18

***Like a club and a sword and a sharp arrow
Is a man who bears false witness against his
neighbor.***

Most people don't consider the destruction that dishonesty brings into a family, a church, or even a nation..

But the reality is that a liar leaves destruction behind him wherever he goes and practices his sin..

Here, the Bible compares the false witness to a club or a sword or a sharp arrow, and the picture is clear..

Lies are weapons that injure and even kill others..

Nations won't survive or be revived when lies are normal...

Families won't survive or be revived where dishonesty occurs..

Lying to someone can be as destructive as hitting them with a club or shooting them with a sharp arrow..

Don't be a false witness and avoid them in your life.

The second person we see in verse 19 is the unreliable person...

19

***Like a bad tooth and [m]an unsteady foot
Is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.***

People expect their teeth to chew up food and people expect their feet to help them walk and stand.

People also expect people to do what they say they will do...

Relationships suffer when someone in that relationship won't hold up their end of the bargain...

Nations suffer when people can't be counted on.

Churches suffer when folks can't be trusted to fulfill their roles..

May the Lord make us trustworthy people and may he also protect us from those who aren't trustworthy.

The third person of this section is found in verse 20..

20

***Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar on [n]soda,
Is he who sings songs to [o]a troubled heart.***

A t-shirt and a cold day don't mix...

The acid of vinegar and the basic nature of soda don't mix...

And neither does a person who sings songs to someone who is heartbroken.

The wisdom here is that we must be sensitive to others in our relationships with them..

Sad people need our mourning with them and not our dancing around them..

Joyous people need our celebrating with them and not our frowns and disappointments...

The simple principle of relationships is that we must be aware of what is going on in someone else's life and act appropriately.

The selfish person smiles when everyone else is crying, and seeks sympathy when everyone else is rejoicing..

Relationships are not a one way street, so make sure you take note of what is happening in their life before you force your feelings on them...

More wisdom for relationships is found in verse 21-22...

WE can call this...

III. Enemies and Eating (21-22)

Not all relationships in this world are going to be friendly relationships...

Though the Christian is called to live at peace with all men...

Not all men live at peace with the Christian...

So are we to live with those who don't seek peace with us?

Quite simple..

Verses 21-22..

21

***If [p]your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;***

22

***For you will [q]heap burning coals on his head,
And the Lord will reward you.***

Relationship wisdom for those in your life who treat you as an enemy is to treat them as a friend.

Number 1 - Feed your enemy when he is hungry..

Number 2 - Give water when he is thirsty.

And the wisdom principle is simple.

Kill your enemy with kindness and the Lord will bless you for it...

This wisdom is lost in our culture today...

The world's wisdom on living with an enemy is simple.

Treat them like they treat you.

In fact, this is now politics in America...

No one takes the high road anymore.

Everyone chooses to take the back alley these days, and the sad reality is that Christians now embrace treating the enemy as they treat us...

Instead of feeding our hungry enemy, we starve them...

Instead of giving water to the thirsty enemy, we watch them die of thirst.

And I can assure you God is not pleased at the number of Christians who ignore these verses..

In case you are tempted to think that this was an OT principle of treating the enemy, Jesus repeats this principle in Matthew 5 and Paul quotes this exact proverb in Romans 12...

According to the word of God, how do you have a relationship with your enemy?

You meet his needs, pray for him, and kill him with kindness.

A fourth relationship principle is found in 23..

IV. Wind and Whispers (23)

23

*The north wind brings forth rain,
And a [r]backbiting tongue, an angry counte-
nance.*

This little verse has created much discussion.

The discussion comes from the fact that a north wind didn't bring rains to Israel..

In fact, the rains in Israel were created by a west wind...

Therefore, some translations like the King James say that the north winds drive away rain, which also isn't entirely true since those same westerly winds usually drive away rain in Israel..

So, what does the north wind do in relation to rain?

It seems best to see the north wind as the bringer of rain in general...

In fact, cold north winds often bring in a cold rain..

In the same way, the whispers of a tongue that gossips and backbites often brings with it angry looks...

In other words, relationships are destroyed by a wagging tongue....

There is no question that countless relationships fail because of slander, gossip, and talking behind someone's back..

Yet guess what?

It doesn't seem to slow down the gossip's tongue..

In fact, I have heard people who have no control over their tongue wonder why they have few friends..

The reason they dont have friends is simple...

Those friends know that if you will tell it to them, you will tell it about them.

May the Lord give us self control of our tongues, and may he steer of clear of those who lack restraint with their words...

Relationship principle #5 is found in verse 24..

V. Corners and Contentions (24)

24

*It is better to live in a corner of the roof
Than [s]in a house shared with a contentious
woman.*

WE have seen this proverb already in Proverbs 21, but it bears repeating here in terms of relationship wisdom...

And the wisdom is simple..

It is better to live outside than inside when the inside of the house is filled with an arguing, complaining, and contentious woman..

The specific application is to the close relationship of a husband and wife, but a wider application would extend to any relationship...

In short, no one enjoys any relationship filled with complaints, dispute and arguments...

And especially close relationships like those that exist between husbands and wives...

If you were here this past Sunday, you were reminded that God takes compiling and contentions seriously.

In fact, God sent deadly serpents when Israel complained about him in the book of Numbers.

Complaining can be deadly, but complaining will certainly kill relationships with others.

Don't be that wife...

Don't be that husband..

Don't be that family member or that friend...

Relationship wisdom #6...

We can call this..

VI. Water and Wisdom (25-26)

25

*Like cold water to a weary soul,
So is good news from a distant land.*

26

*Like a trampled spring and a [t]polluted well
Is a righteous man who gives way before the
wicked.*

Not all water is created equal.

Tonya will swim in a pool but avoid the lake and ocean.

I will drink from the sink but not from the toilet.

In these two verses, we learn about relationships through good and bad water...

Let's first deal with the good water..

And the simple principle is this..

Good news is like good water in that both are enjoyed by the people who receive them..

In terms of our relationships with others, it is good to be the bearer of good news in the lives of the people around us...

Yet, we live in a culture that loves to deliver to bad news..

I see people who enjoy sharing bad news with others.

It is almost like it gives them pleasure to see others in misery..

Talk shows thrive on this principle of delivering bad news to the public..

New shows gain popularity by reporting bad news..

Yet, God's wisdom says the one who shares good news is like cold water to a weary soul...

I dont think there is any question that sharing the gospel is seen here in this proverb..

The gospel means good news.

And certainly Christians ought to be those who are sharing the good news of salvation with the world..

Unfortunately, it seems that more Christians live to pass around bad news than to than the good news.

The world doesn't need more bad news, but it certainly needs the good news of the gospel.

And good news is like good water.

However, not all water is good..

Verse 26 says that a righteous man who gives way to the wicked is like polluted water..

The idea of giving way to the wicked is the picture of a man who compromises his integrity to wicked people...

So many pastors today are compromising the truth to the culture of the world..

Pastors who now support gay marriage are rising every day..

Pastors who now support abortion are rising every day.

Pastors who deny the inerrancy of Scripture are rising every day..

Pastors who trade the teaching of the truth for allegiance to a political party are rising every day...

And all of that compromise is like a fresh water that has been polluted...

May God help us not to be part of that group of people who give up our convictions due to the pressure of the world around us...

And may God also protect us from those who do...

The final two verses bring us back to where we started...

Let's call this..

VII. Cities and Self-Control (27-28)

Verse 27...

27

***It is not good to eat much honey,
Nor is it glory to search out [u]one's own glory.***

28

***Like a city that is broken into and without walls
Is a man who has no control over his spirit.***

This little section on personal relationships ends with another reference to self control..

We see a man who lacks self control is like a city without walls..

In other words, someone who lacks discipline leaves them open to attack from the enemy.

And discipline is certainly necessary in relationships.

In this world, you have no control over how people treat you..

Even those closest to you can sin against you, can speak harshly to you, can mistreat you..

This is a reality of a fallen people in a fallen world, and that make relationships difficult..

Yet regardless of how we are treated, we must have the self control to not return evil for evil..

The saying is true.

You can't control what others do to you, but you can control how you respond to them.

Relationships require discipline and self control at all times.

We must restrain ourselves at times.

WE must say no to responding harshly when treated harshly.

We must bite our tongue even when someone wags their tongue at us..

If you can't put down the jar of honey, you will end up overweight and miserable..

But it must also be said that if you can't control yourself in your relationships, you will end up lonely and without friends.

Therefore, we must be disciplined in our relationships as we seek to love God and love others.

Conclusion

If we pull out and look at the big picture of Proverbs 25, we see God giving wisdom to Israel at a critical time in their history.

They were a divided nation due to the fact that civil war had broken out between the 12 tribes of Israel...

War is result when people can't get along, and when that war happens within a nation, it is evidence that love for another had grown cold.

Therefore, God led the men of Hezekiah to the wisdom that he had given Solomon concerning our relationships with one another...

Our day is not much different than Hezekiah's day...

Our country, our world is equally poor at loving one another...

As a result, nations collapse and wage war with one another..

Crime rises as the love of one another grows colder and colder..

In some ways, the Bible predicts such a downward spiral of human relationships.

In fact, relationships have been suffering ever since sin entered the garden and Cain killed Abel..

Yet, we live in a time where relationships are being destroyed more and more frequently..

My challenge to each of you and myself is let us as believers not contribute to that in our lives...

May we be peacemakers.

May we be at peace with all men..

May we be willing to be wronged in order for relationships to endure..

And that all begins when we are willing to love others more than we love ourselves..

The greatest example of that kind of love for others is who?

Jesus.

The One who gave up his life so that others could find eternal life in his name...

I am grateful that Christ was willing to be wronged
in order to make a relationship with Him possible..

May we all be just as unselfish.

Let us pray.