

Pondering Proverbs #4

Proverbs 26-27

MEMORY VERSE

PROVERBS 27:2

“Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A paper plate.

A chalk/dry-erase board and chalk or dry-erase markers.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Others Can Affect Me

You will need one paper plate. Have the class split in half and stand in two lines. Have them stand about three feet apart, making an aisle. Choose one child to walk down the middle balancing the paper plate upside down on his/her head. The children in the lines will try to cause the paper plate to fall off of their head. They can only blow or fan with their arms. They cannot touch the person in the center or move out of line. Allow several students to go through the center. Then, ask the children to sit down together; ask them to describe the effect that the children had who were trying to cause the paper plate to fall down. Was it effective?

How is this game like peer pressure in the real world? God has a lot to say in Proverbs about our friends and how they impact us, and how we impact them.

LESSON TIME!

NOTE TO TEACHERS: WE HAVE PROVIDED COMMENTARY ON ALL OF CHAPTERS 26 AND 27. PLEASE PRAY AND READ THROUGH YOUR LESSON ASKING THE LORD FOR WISDOM IN CHOOSING THE AREAS HE WOULD WANT YOU TO SHARE WITH YOUR CLASS. DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO SHARE EVERY VERSE IN YOUR CLASS.

Proverbs Chapters 26 and 26 are packed full of nuggets of wisdom. We are exhorted throughout these proverbs to examine the characteristics of those who behave foolishly compared to those who behave wisely. Much instruction is given concerning our relationships. God is deeply concerned with the way those around us impact us and the way we impact them. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 26:1

As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.

If it were to snow in the summer, when it is hot, it would go against nature. If it were to rain during the harvest time, it would be a hindrance to the harvesting of the crops. In the same way, honor and a fool do not go together. Those who are wise walk in the fear of the Lord.

PROVERBS 26:2

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight.

He who is cursed without cause will not be harmed by it. It will be like a bird flying over his head, causing him no harm. When we walk in obedience to God and our actions are honorable, He takes care of our integrity. God is the protection of the innocent.

PROVERBS 26:3

A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the fool's back.

A person can guide a horse with a whip and a donkey with a bridle, but the only way to guide a fool is with a rod to his back. That may sound a bit harsh, but when a person hardens their heart and refuses to change their direction, difficult and hard things will come into their lives as a result. A fool needs to be dealt with harshly. It is never fun to be corrected or disciplined, but through it we learn obedience. Discipline that causes us to change our direction so our lives can experience God's blessings is well worth the discomfort.

PROVERBS 26:4, 5

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.

These two verses may seem to contradict one another, but they really do not. Remember two things: 1) There is nothing to be gained in answering a fool in "his own way" (in other words, do not react foolishly, becoming like the fool. 2) Yet, we are to answer a fool in his folly, correcting him, so he is not convinced that he is right (wise in his own eyes). There are many examples in the Bible when God's people were used by God to stand up against wickedness. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 26:6-9

He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.

Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool.

Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Verse 6 tells us that to trust a fool to deliver a message is just as ridiculous as cutting off your feet and drinking poison. A fool is not to be trusted even with handling a message. Perhaps, it would never be delivered. Perhaps, if verbal, it would be twisted from the meaning the sender intended.

“Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of fools.” What nuggets of wisdom the proverbs are! Yet, if a person does not allow the wise things they hear to sink from his mind to his heart, those nuggets of wisdom have been useless to him. How sad! Do we allow the Word of God to have a real affect on our life? Do we meditate on God’s Word and let it make a difference in our actions?

Verse 8 points out that giving honor to a fool could backfire on you. Would you put a stone in the sling shot of a rebel?

PROVERBS 26:10

The great God who formed everything gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages.

God is over all His creation; He is patient and gracious. Even those who refuse to serve Him receive their life and ability to work and earn money. People can seem to have everything in this world, yet they can be a successful fool. Money or popularity do not mean a person is wise. Be careful not to choose friends based on the outward appearance. What’s in the heart? Do they fear the Lord?
We should be wise in our relationships.

PROVERBS 26:11

As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.

Have you ever seen a dog get sick, vomit and then go back to that vomit and eat it? It is really pretty disgusting to us, but that is the picture that the Lord creates in this proverb. Foolish people do exactly the same thing with their lives. They get sick of their sin, and yet they go back to their disgusting sin over and over again. Matthew Henry comments, “As the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burdened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners, who have been convinced only and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. Peter (2 Peter 2:22) applies this proverb to those that have known the way of righteousness but have turned away from it. As Christians, we will stumble and fall; but we are to get up and get going in the right direction. We are not to repeat the same sin over and over without desire to be different; we are not to wallow in the mud—that would be the way of the fool.

PROVERBS 26:12

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

This verse tells us that there is one thing worse than a fool—one who thinks he is wise and is not—that man is prideful; his confidence in his own wisdom has blinded him.

PROVERBS 26:13-15

The lazy man says, “There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!”

As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed.

The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; it wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.

These verses paint for us a picture of a lazy person. He will make any excuse for not working, even ridiculous ones: “a lion in the streets.” The lazy man doesn’t get up out of bed, like a door on hinges turning back and forth, but not going anywhere. The slothful and self-indulgent man desires to eat, but he is too lazy to even feed himself!

PROVERBS 26:16

The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.

Here we see that the lazy man thinks himself wiser than seven men who hold up well under questioning. He has had much practice excusing himself for his behavior and not listening to others. He begins to convince himself that the excuses he offers can really be justified.

PROVERBS 26:17

He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears.

Have you ever yanked a dog’s ears? That would be a very foolish thing to do, wouldn’t it? The dog could turn around and bite you. To do so would be as foolish as interfering in an argument that is not any of your business. You will get dragged into it, and it will end up biting you!

PROVERBS 26:18, 19

Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death,

Is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, “I was only joking!”

It is a poor choice to deceive our neighbors; it is like madmen that throw firebrands and arrows. We cannot lie to our neighbor and say that we were just fooling, or joking around. We have hurt them and destroyed their trust. It is never right to tell a lie.

PROVERBS 26:20-22

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.

As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.

The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.

If a fire has no fuel to feed it, it will eventually go out, oftentimes very quickly. Gossip needs fuel to spread. If you want to stop gossip, refuse to listen to it. Without a recipient, gossip dies. Many hearts can be kept from being hurt by putting out the fuel of gossip.

In verse 21, we see a contentious (argumentative) man. We might say, “As quickly as a match sets fire to a piece of paper, so does a man who likes to quarrel, start fights. It only takes a little thing to set him off. God gives to us His Holy Spirit to help us not get angry and start fights. James tells us in chapter 1:19, 20, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.”

In verse 22, we read that the words of slander are as beautiful tidbits to those who speak them, but they can go down into the heart of the person slandered and cause deadly wounds. How important it is that we speak words of truth and love to one another. Our words should build up, not destroy. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 26:23

Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross.

A person can say nice, pretty words; but just as a beautiful glaze covers a common clay pot, so nice words can hide a wicked heart. People can say insincere words of love, yet hold hatred in their hearts. How important that we not be fake; may our words reflect the truth of our heart. God sees what is in a person's heart, no matter how hard they try to cover it.

PROVERBS 26:24-26

He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself;

When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart;

Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.

A person can have hatred in his heart and yet say pleasant things; a wise person will not be betrayed. In the end, that person's true hatred will be revealed.

PROVERBS 26:27

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.

God's Word here tells us that the man who sets a trap for others will get caught in his own trap. Roll a boulder down on someone, and it will roll back and crush you. In other words, do not plan bad things for others; it will come back on you. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 26:28

A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

A lying tongue hates those whom it has wounded and crushed, and the person who flatters with their mouth is working towards another person's destruction. Flattery is when we say nice things to others to get them to do something we want or to make them think well of us. Flattery is a form of lying and can hurt others badly. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

Mixed-Up Proverbs

Have the class split into two or three small teams. Before class, choose four or five verses from the Proverbs that we are studying. Write the entire proverb on the board not leaving any spaces in between words. Explain to the children that this verse is in the two chapters we are studying. Tell them to keep their Bibles closed and when you say "go" they are to open their Bibles and find what verse is written.

The first team that can come up with the verse wins that round. Play four to five rounds and talk about the meaning of each verse.

PROVERBS 27:1

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

This verse tells us not to brag about what you will do tomorrow, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow. James 4:13-15 tells us, "Come now, you that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; Whereas you know not, what shall be on the next day. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, 'If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.'"

PROVERBS 27:2

Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Humility and wisdom stand out in this scripture; for it tells us to let other people praise us, and not to praise ourselves. The Bible says we do not even know our own hearts. God weighs our hearts and actions. If our actions merit praise, it is better that it comes from an observer than ourselves.

Philippians 2:3 tells us, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” James 4:10 also tells us, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.” God sees all we do, and He will honor us as He sees fit.

PROVERBS 27:3, 4

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool’s wrath is heavier than both of them.

Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

Here we see that when the anger of a fool is provoked, he doesn’t care what he says or does; his anger is more painful than a great stone or a load of sand. The people who cannot control their anger or jealousy hurt themselves by sinking under the load of it and hurting others when it unloads on them. It is wise for others not to provoke them to anger (get out of their way) and to pray for them.

PROVERBS 27:5, 6

Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Open rebuke is better than love that is hidden. It is good for us to be corrected and told our faults by our friends. True love will speak the truth, because it puts the other person first, above our own comfort level. Secret love is a love that is hidden; it does not show the fruit of genuine love; for, perhaps for fear of rejection, it will not correct one that is wrong.

We also see that the wounds of a friend are faithful. The word wound indicates pain and hurt. At times, the truth hurts us, but if we take our pain to the Lord, and commit it to Him, He will help us. There is a contrast here between the wounds of a friend and the kisses of an enemy; one would think that it would be the other way around. Truth may hurt us, but it does us good; while flattery (kisses of an enemy) can destroy us. If you have a faithful friend, who is willing to lovingly rebuke you, consider him a treasure. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 27:7

A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Perhaps, this proverb would warn us not to get out of shape spiritually—filling gluttoned (stuffed) with God’s blessings, yet not giving them out to make room for more. If we are busy serving, giving, sharing, and loving, our output will make us hungry for more input; we will find ourselves hungry for more and more the God’s Word and work in our lives. We will not demand that the sermons we hear will be the best ever preached; instead, our every approach to church will be with anticipation.

Perhaps, we are also reminded that as God satiates our lives with His blessings, we are to keep a grateful heart. Do not forget to appreciate all God has done in your life and remember where you would be without His daily presence and blessings.

PROVERBS 27:8

Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who wanders from his place.

There is a safety in our homes, a place of protection and comfort. There is safety as we remain in the place God has called us. Many people do not realize the blessing and protection they have been provided. Feeling discontent, they wander, not caring or committing to the work at home. This does not refer to the person who is called by God to another place; it refers to the wanderer who pursues a cure for his restlessness. Just as a bird that leaves the nest is in danger of being hunted and killed, the person who wanders from God's call in his life, places himself in great danger. It is always best and safest to be obedient to God's call upon our lives.

PROVERBS 27:9, 10

Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.

Perfume is a pleasant thing to all of us; the smell is sweet. It is good to have a friend that we can be free to communicate our heart to. We should greatly appreciate the friendships God gives us. Seek to build good friendships; then in difficult times, you can go to your friends for support rather than seek out a distant relative. Friendship is truly a gift from the Lord. **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 27:11

My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me.

It is a true joy for a parent to know that their children are wise and sensible—walking in the ways of the Lord. Children may be tempted to feel their parents are too hard on them; but a parent who disciplines well will save himself/herself from reproach (blame) for the child's present and future conduct.

PROVERBS 27:12

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished.

Evil can be seen ahead of time. If we give in to temptation, we can know that there will be sin, and then the result of the sin. The wise man will watch for problems before they happen and will take the necessary action to prevent them, i.e., remove himself from temptation. You may love riding rapids, but would you ride the rapids above Niagara Falls. No! Because you know what's coming up ahead. The fool does not look ahead, and therefore, suffers the consequences.

PROVERBS 27:13

Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress.

It is never a wise decision for a person to pay a stranger's debt. It is a good way to get into trouble. This appears to be a warning to be careful in our business dealings not to lend money to people who we know just waste their money, unless they can give very good collateral for the loan.

PROVERBS 27:14

He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it will be counted a curse to him.

It is rather foolish to yell out a pleasant greeting to a friend too early in the morning. The friend and other people may consider it a curse rather than a blessing.

PROVERBS 27:15, 16

A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike;

Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand.

A nagging woman can be very annoying. Here she is compared to continual dripping on a very rainy day. A friend may annoy you, but you can get away from a friend; however, you cannot get away from a wife. Unless God changes the heart of the contentious woman, stopping the drip is quite impossible. Concerning our words springing for from our heart, Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).

PROVERBS 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Good conversation is as stimulating as sparks that fly when iron hits iron. As iron hits another piece of iron, it sharpens it and makes it of good use. By wise discussions, we can sharpen each other. We can encourage, exhort, and when necessary, rebuke seeking to build each other up in our relationship with God. How important good friends are! **We should be wise in our relationships.**

PROVERBS 27:18

Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit; so he who waits on his master will be honored.

A workman who takes care of another person's fig tree, or orchard, may eat freely of it. In the same way, he who is wise in listening and obeying their master, will be rewarded for their care, concern, and good work.

PROVERBS 27:19

As in water face reflects face, so a man's heart reveals the man.

When we look into a mirror, it shows us what we look like on the outside. Our heart, the very center of our life, will be revealed by the words we speak and the actions we take and show clearly what is inside. Again, Jesus said, "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45).

PROVERBS 27:20

Hell and Destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

No matter how many people die, there remains room in Hell for those who reject God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Sin, likewise, is never satisfied. Feeding sin only leads to more desire—an appetite that cannot be filled. Jesus called unsatisfied people to fill their emptiness, their hunger and thirst, by coming to Him: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37).

PROVERBS 27:21

The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man is valued by what others say of him.

The King James translates this verse: “As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” We can test the purity of silver and gold by putting them in the refining fire, which will bring out all the impurities of the metal. A man is tested by his reaction to other men’s praise. Either he can become full of pride because of men’s praises, or he can give thanks God.

PROVERBS 27:22

Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him.

You can never separate a foolish man from his foolishness, even if you try to crush him to powder. He will not give up his foolishness, even if he is crushed; for he will not be humbled or refined since his heart is determined to do evil. God must change his heart.

PROVERBS 27:23-27

Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds;

For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.

When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,

The lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field;

You shall have enough goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household, and the nourishment of your maidservants.

We are called to be diligent in everything we do. To be diligent means to pay attention and work hard. Whatever we are called to, we must apply ourselves to the best of our ability. We are not to be lazy or fail to assume responsibility.

A Word of Wisdom

Have your class divide again into the same teams as the “Mixed-Up Proverbs” game. Choose four or five additional verses from the two chapters we just discussed. This time, tell the teams to open their Bibles. You will write one word from the verse on the board. The teams may not yell out the answer. Teams will only get one guess per round, so they need to work together to be sure of the answer they want to give.

If no one can guess based on one word, write down another word from the verse. Keep going until the correct verse is guessed. You can do a point system if you like awarding more points to the team who guesses with fewer words. In other words, you might award 100 points to the team who guesses with one word, 75 points to those with two words, 50 points with three words, etc. Play several rounds, then add up the points and declare a winner.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to be wise in their relationships. If there are any children, who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.