

# My Favorite Thing About PROVERBS and ECCLESIASTES

Proverbs 4:20-23

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As we read Scripture, it is easy to get bogged down by all the perceived differences between the ancient and the modern and we wonder, "How does this apply to my life?"

My Favorite Thing About PROVERBS and ECCLESIASTES is that they are a practical guide to the value and benefit of pursuing Godly wisdom.

To truly understand the importance of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, we must first take a look at the life of Solomon.

## A Brief History of Solomon

Solomon was the son of David and Bathsheba. When David died, Solomon became king of the United Kingdom of Israel.

Solomon had a dream in which God asked him what he desired most. Solomon could have chosen anything, but he chose wisdom.

However, as time went on, Solomon began to make choices that led him away from God. Everything God told kings **NOT TO DO** {see **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**} Solomon **DID**:

- Don't get your horses from Egypt = Guess where Solomon went for his horses. {1 Kings 10:26-28}
- Don't have multiple wives, lest your heart be turned away = Guess how many wives/concubines Solomon had. {1 Kings 11:1-4}
- Don't gather silver and gold for yourself = Guess Solomon's annual salary {1 Kings 10:14}

Those choices led directly to the lasting fracture between Judah and Israel.

Jewish tradition says Solomon wrote:

- The Song his youth – dedicating it to his 1<sup>st</sup> wife – Pharaoh's daughter, who was Solomon's one and only wife for twenty years. (see 1 Kings 3:1)
- Proverbs in the prime of his life.
- Ecclesiastes toward the end of his life.

**Proverbs** are general truths that develop from observing how the world works. They are practical sound bites of useful advice:

- **Proverbs 4:20-23** - My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. <sup>21</sup> Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; <sup>22</sup> for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. <sup>23</sup> Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- **Proverbs 5:3-4** - For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; <sup>4</sup> but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.
- **Proverbs 10:10** - He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin.
- **Proverbs 10:14** - Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.
- **Proverbs 12:19** - Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.
- **Proverbs 12:25** - An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.
- **Proverbs 13:24** - He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.
- **Proverbs 14:21** - He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy.
- **Proverbs 15:1** - A gentle answer turns away anger, but mean words stir up anger.
- **Proverbs 16:2** - All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.
- **Proverbs 16:5** - The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.
- **Proverbs 17:15** - Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent-- the LORD detests them both.
- **Proverbs 19:15** - Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.
- **Proverbs 20:3** - It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

- **Proverbs 21:9** - Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.
- **Proverbs 25:21-22** - If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. <sup>22</sup> In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

All excellent, but they are not all there is to the Book of Proverbs. Tied up in every piece of advice is Wisdom. Not worldly wisdom. Godly Wisdom:

- **Proverbs 2:1-11** - My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, <sup>2</sup> turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, <sup>3</sup> and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, <sup>4</sup> and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. <sup>7</sup> He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, <sup>8</sup> for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. <sup>9</sup> Then you will understand what is right and just and fair-- every good path. <sup>10</sup> For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. <sup>11</sup> Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.
- **Proverbs 4:5-12** - Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. <sup>6</sup> Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. <sup>7</sup> Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. <sup>8</sup> Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. <sup>9</sup> She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor." <sup>10</sup> Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. <sup>11</sup> I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. <sup>12</sup> When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.

Godly wisdom helps us to make right choices and brings the balance we need in life and provides perspective in death. Wisdom will guard us in our daily lives from fanatical extremes and will protect us from evil and deception. It will expose the Devil and reveal the truth of God. When we decide to stop trying to gain human wisdom and instead allow God to give us HIS wisdom then our lives will have divine perspective that will empower and enlighten us as we move through life.

Despite his famous wisdom, in many ways Solomon's life was a disaster, because of his choices. In Ecclesiastes we find a man who has come to the end of the dead-end road. He has wasted his life in the pursuit of pleasure, fame, fortune, success, power and self-gratification, only to discover that in the end, none of it mattered.

**Ecclesiastes 1:2** - "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is **vanity.**" {"breath or vapor"}

- We desire the wrong things. We love pleasure and wealth. We try to please ourselves and pursue life based on our emotions and desires. We trust these things, but they never last and they never really benefit or satisfy us.
- Advancement or getting to the top is meaningless. Position, popularity, and prestige are poor life goals. Although many pursue them, they are shadows without substance. Many people seek recognition for their accomplishments; but people are fickle, changing quickly and easily. People will throng to those who are popular at the time – but popularity passes. There are those who are heroes one day – but zeroes the next.
- Poor people suffer. Good people suffer. Important and powerful people are often wicked and corrupt and those who rule over us are often unfair. There will be trials throughout our lives – no one is exempt – and then we die.

Solomon has come to realize that all of life – the good things and the bad things are meaningless without God:

- **Ecclesiastes 1:17** - Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.
- **Ecclesiastes 2:11** - Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.
- **Ecclesiastes 12:1** - Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"--
- **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** - Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole *duty* of man. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

There truly is nothing new under the sun! Men's hearts are the same now as in Solomon's day. The desires are the same. The pursuits are the same. The goals are the same. The dissatisfactions are the same. The complaints are ... the same. Fashion's change, technology changes, we think we are modern – but so did they.

The only thing that ends up really mattering is one's relationship with God because that is the only thing that has eternal longevity. It's the only thing that makes the end of this life not the end of our story.

There is nothing mysterious about the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. In them we are clearly shown that in this life there are only 2 roads - each leading to a different destination. The only way to end up at the right destination is to choose the right road and Godly Wisdom helps us do that.

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