

**PROVERBS:**  
**STOPPING STRIFE**

Wednesday, April 15

Reading: Proverbs 18:13-18

*Proverbs 18:15* The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.

The words of James 3:16-17 could be written over these proverbs.

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

How do we combat strife? Proverbs 18 gives us some good advice on how to prevent strife and how to stop it when it does occur.

**LISTEN BEFORE YOU SPEAK (18:13)** – This proverb reminds us of the importance of listening. Only those who believe they have all the answers must tell everyone about it and get ‘the last word.’ “The fool is so interested in airing his own views, and so uninterested in listening to others, that he speaks prematurely or even rudely interrupts. His words therefore display his folly and thus bring shame on himself.”<sup>1</sup>

**BE SENSITIVE (18:14)** – Too often we focus on the outward appearance instead of thinking about what is going on inside a person. Outward illness can be overcome, but “a crushed spirit” is far more difficult to heal. We must be sensitive to the emotional and spiritual health of people.

**GET ALL THE FACTS (18:15)** – It is the wise who realize just how little they know and seek out knowledge and understanding. They do not make hasty decisions or judgments before having a good grasp on what is actually going on.

**AVOID PARTIALITY (18:16)** – This proverb presents the way things are, not necessarily the way things should be. The Hebrew word translated “gift” (*mattan*) is different than the word used for ‘bribe’ (*sohad*). However, these two Hebrew words are paralleled in Proverbs 21:14. A gift given to curry favor with “the great” has the same effect as a bribe. It can promote favoritism and injustice (see 17:8, 23). We are not to judge based on what we can get out of it. Gifts should be given freely and not as a means of getting what you want. We should not let gifts sway our judgment.

**HEAR BOTH SIDES (18:17)** – Only hearing one side of an argument can be misleading. A wise person will not make snap judgments without investigating and understanding the whole situation.

**LEAVE IT UP TO THE LORD (18:18)** – Often disputes cannot be settled easily. As mentioned in Proverbs 16:33, casting lots was a way of determining God’s will. While we do not use this method today, it is often still necessary to leave the problem in God’s hands. We must submit to God’s will revealed for us in His Word and let the Holy Spirit guide us into ending the strife.

<sup>1</sup> David Finkbeiner. ‘Proverbs’ Moody Bible Commentary, p. 931