

Pondering Proverbs #3

Proverbs 22-23

MEMORY VERSE

PROVERBS 22:1

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Six sheets of paper, tape, and some plastic gemstones.

Two index cards with two different scenarios written on them before class for the children to act out (see “Acting School” activity).

Several slips of paper, markers, plastic gemstones (use the same ones as in the Attention Getter), a paper bag, construction paper and stickers.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Wisdom Auction

For this activity, you will need six sheets of paper, tape, and some plastic gemstones. Give each child a few gemstones to bid with. On five sheets of paper, write five things that children might like to buy, such as in-line skates, a trip to an amusement park, season tickets to their favorite sports team, etc. Then on the sixth sheet of paper, write down “wisdom.” Tape all six sheets to the wall.

Hold an auction and allow children to bid on the items. Allow them to join together if they would like. Save wisdom until the very end. When they bid on wisdom, do not allow any of them to buy it. Explain that no amount of money or precious gems is enough to buy wisdom; it is far more valuable than anything we can buy with money. **Seek the riches of God’s wisdom!**

LESSON TIME!

God has a lot to say about riches—true riches, which are spiritual and earthly riches (money), which are material. What we value most will show us clearly what priority God has in our life. Matthew 6:21 states: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Let’s look at some wisdom from proverbs concerning true riches and handling material riches.

PROVERBS 22:1-2, 4

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
loving favor rather than silver and gold.

The rich and the poor have this in common, the
LORD is the maker of them all.

By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and
honor and life.

This chapter starts out by telling us that “a good name” (or reputation) is to be chosen rather than great riches. Think about someone you know. What is the first thing that comes to your mind? Is he/she kind, loving, and gentle, or is he/she rude, mean, and selfish? Then, think about yourself and what people think about you when they hear your name.

If we have asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit dwells inside. If we walk in the Spirit, allowing God’s Spirit to have control, our lives will produce good fruit—we will have a good name among those who fear God. If we do not walk in the Spirit, bad fruit will result—we will have a poor name and a poor reputation. As Christians, we should be growing in godly character—developing a good name among those who fear God.

Is there a difference between a rich person and a poor person? Proverbs 22:2 says they have this in common: God made them both. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35). He does not love or favor one more than the other. Having more clothes, more food to eat, or more things than another person does not make one better or mean one is more favored by God. In James, chapter 2, we are warned, "...do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. Deuteronomy 10:17 states, "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality." **Seek the riches of God's wisdom!**

"By humility and the fear of Lord are riches and honor and life." The riches we receive as we fear (deeply respect) the Lord may be material riches (money); but they may also be spiritual riches. True riches are ours through a relationship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We are truly rich when Christ, the hope of glory, dwells inside us. True riches include God's many precious promises to us, including eternal life! True riches come in the form of love, joy, peace, etc.--the fruit of the Spirit that results from our relationship with God.

PROVERBS 22:9, 16

He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). A person with a generous eye will be looking for opportunities to give and will be blessed as a result. **Seek the riches of God's wisdom!**

Of course, we do not give in order to be blessed or so others will think we are really "cool" or "great"--that would be completely messed-up motivations! We give because we are grateful for God's blessing to us and His love dwelling inside us urges us to do so.

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:3, 4, "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." Basically, Jesus is telling us, "When you do something kind and generous, don't go around telling everyone what you have done. If you do, that will be your reward. But if you keep quiet and do not make a big deal about giving, then God will reward you."

Verse 16 says the person who oppresses (uses) the poor to get rich and gives to the rich will become poor. God's blessing will not be upon those who use others to achieve their main goal of being rich. **Seek the riches of God's wisdom!**

Acting School

Choose four volunteers to go to acting school. Their task will be to take a situation that you will give them and act it out. There will be two situations for two pairs of children. The first situation is how not to treat those who have less than we do. The second situation is how we should treat those who have less than us. This activity will teach the children how Christians should treat others who may have less.

Before class, write down two scenarios for the children to act out on index cards. The first should be any scenario that has a person treating a poor person in the wrong way. The next scenario should be a person treating a poor person the right way.

After the scenarios, gather all of the children together and ask which scenario is the one that pleases the Lord? Why?

PROVERBS 22:22, 23

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;

For the LORD will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

Again and again, we read that God takes up the cause of the poor. Let us never be guilty of standing against God as He defends the poor.

During the Bible times, cities were usually surrounded by walls and had a gate leading into the city. At the entrance of the city, you would see men of prominence (leaders of the city) sitting and discussing important affairs of the city; you would also see beggars. Gates also led to the homes of the rich people of the city. The people who were lame and poor would sit at the gates begging for food and money. These poor people would often be robbed of the little they had or be treated cruelly because of their physical condition. God solemnly warns those who would plunder (rob/damage) the poor. Instead, we need to help those who are poor and oppressed.

Jesus relates personally with those who are poor and needy. As Jesus warns of coming judgment in Matthew 25:34-46, He reveals His deep connection with those who suffer:

...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? "When did we see You a stranger

and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

How are we treating those who are less fortunate than ourselves? This is an important question. How do you treat Jesus? God wants us to treat others who are hurting with love, compassion, and kindness.

PROVERBS 23:4, 5

Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease!

Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.

We are not to make getting rich our priority in life. We certainly need money to be able to live in this world—food, clothing, and shelter, are important; but we must be careful not to allow it to become the most important thing in our lives. That place is only reserved for the Lord.

Following the warning not to overwork to be rich, verse 4 admonishes, "because of your own understanding, cease!" Cease means "STOP!" What does it mean by "because of your own understanding"? In Isaiah 55:8, the Lord says to us, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." God tells us that we do not think like He does, about anything. He speaks so much to us about money and wisdom with it because He knows how easily we can be tempted to allow it to become more important in our lives than it ought to be. Riches are deceitful.

They can trick us into believing they are the key to happiness and success. We need God's constant help to keep money in its proper place.

“Overworking” to become rich has led some people to work so many hours or become so absorbed in their work that they neglect their family and have little time for spiritual things. Money is not evil; it is the loving of it that is a sin—when it becomes more important than loving God and family.

Riches, we are reminded, can be here one day and gone the next. Just when you think you have a nice amount in the bank, the car breaks down or the refrigerator gives out. Let us keep our focus on the Lord, not on uncertain riches. God will never leave us nor forsake us; let's put our trust in Him for everything. **Seek the riches of God's wisdom!**

Our heart is truly with whatever we treasure (Matthew 6:21). Yet, things that we treasure more than God have deceived us—they will never bring true happiness. Even as a child, examining how you handle money now is a good way to know whether or not it is what you treasure most. How do you spend your money? Maybe you earn allowance at home for doing chores, or maybe you've received money for birthdays or Christmas? Have you asked God to give you wisdom with the money you get? Have you ever prayed for the Lord to show you how He wants you to use that money?

Proverbs is packed with wisdom in the important area of handling material riches. Let's summarize. Having a lot of money is not a sin; hoarding our money (keeping it all to ourselves) is a sin. Some in this world are rich and some are poor. Both rich and poor are loved by God, equally. God is compassionate and relates very personally with those who are poor; if we are blessed with money, we can demonstrate His love by sharing with those in need. God will bless our lives as we allow Him to control this important area of our lives.

Choosing a Good Name

Our memory verse today says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.” We do not get to choose our names, do we? But we can choose whether or not we will have a “good name.” A good name” is referring to our reputation. To have someone hear our names and think about someone who is kind, obedient, or helpful is better than not being those things and having all of the riches in the world!

Before class, write down as many “good” characteristics as come to mind, for example: kind, gentle, faithful, etc. Write them on small slips of paper and place them in a bag. On a separate piece of construction paper (one sheet for each child), allow the children to draw their names. Using the plastic gems from the “Attention Getter,” give the children a few gemstones each. Have them give you their gemstones in exchange for “drawing” a characteristic from your bag. Use this activity to illustrate how much more important a “good name” is rather than many riches.

On their piece of construction paper, have the children write down their characteristics under their name, then finish decorating.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for all that the Lord has given them. Pray the Lord will give them understanding of what true riches are and how to use material riches in a way that honors the One who has given them. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.