

**The Weekly Word**  
July 16-22, 2018

May Proverbs cause you to think about your life. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, July 16: Proverbs 11- The strength of many advisors...**

I was attracted to verse 14. *For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.*

The words that grip me are *many advisers*. It is not only about getting advice; the proverb speaks of many advisers. I may be over reaching the text, but this seems to suggest many advisers with various opinions. I don't think Solomon is suggesting that a king surround himself with many 'yes men,' people who all say what the king wants to hear. Nor do I think Solomon is suggesting that the king surround himself with people who think only one way. It strikes me that the 'many advisers' suggests having wise people share their varied thoughts so that as everyone weighs the advice allowing the best option to rise to the surface.

If I am reading this correctly then this proverb is true not only for nations, but also companies, group, even individuals. Surround yourself with wise people of various thoughts, backgrounds and ways of thinking... listen and then their advice and by God's grace, the best options will rise to the top.

Does this guarantee victory? No. Time and chance happen to everyone; still this offers the greatest possibility for victory and positive futures.

This proverb begs the question of me... do I seek the advice of many wise friends and associates when I need to make critical decisions? Do you?

This proverb seems true not only for nations, but also companies, groups, even individuals.  
*Lord, give me wisdom in making friends and associates. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen*

**Tuesday, July 17: Proverbs 12- A prescription or help alleviate anxiety...**

Anxiety is a scourge of our age. Everywhere I turn I hear reports about how anxiety is rampant among this group or that group of people. In conversation so many people offer how anxious they are about politics and driving and this and that. News headlines sensationalize, fostering anxiety.

I guess the anxious climate of our times drew me to verse 25: *Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.*

Anxiety certainly does weigh down the heart. So what can I do to help people I meet who seem to be weighed down with anxiety? I can offer a kind word. It sounds so simple, but this is not always my natural response.

Listen to conversations and hear how people respond when someone shares an anxiety. Often they add to it, "Oh, yes, I heard...." Or they dismiss it making the person feel small, "Really you let that (fill in the blank) bother you?" Or they spiritualize it or push to solve it. Sadly, these do not encourage.

What does this proverb suggest? *A kind word cheers it up.* Stop and think about that for a moment. You meet someone and in conversation they share something about which they are anxious. What might be a kind word you could offer....

“My, I didn’t know you were struggling, I have a moment if it would help to talk?”

“I can see this is difficult for you, is there something I can do to help?”

There are many ways you can speak a kind word, these are only two possibilities.

A kind word considers the other person. It sympathizes and cares. It builds up and does these things with permission.

Just imagine a world where people routinely share kind words with others. How much more pleasant it would be. Would all anxiety disappear? Certainly not. But it would be a kinder place to live.

Think about it...

*Lord, show me how to respond kindly to others. Develop in me the fruit of kindness. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, July 18: Proverbs 13- Financial pretense...**

Pretense... I guess it attacks every age. *One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth (7).*

Now it is certainly different to live above ones means pretending to be rich than living within and below your means as if you have nothing. The former creates a hole that can and does swallow whole families.

I just read a 2017 study reporting that 38% of American households carry on average \$16,000 in credit card debt. Credit card debt is among the worst debt possible since it is often 15-20% interest. A second study reveals that credit card debt increased in 2018 by \$800/household, which means that since only 38% carry debt these households increased their debt \$2100 in the last year!

Pretense, living above ones means, pretending to be who we are not, being unwise in our financial dealings... the burden this places on families is enormous.

These studies don’t reveal why these households have debt. Are they pretending to be a higher ‘class’ than their salaries allow? Did major medical debt swallow them? Did a primary wage earner lose a job and the debt kept them afloat till a new job was found? I don’t know and I can’t say.

Still the warning of the proverb is clear to me... live within your means and shun pretense. To pretend to be rich, to build a façade of wealth or status, isn’t worth the pressure it places upon the household. It robs the family of any joy they may have had in life.

Pretense, pretending to be who we are not, kills...

Be who God made you to be. Live within the means God gives to you. Better yourself if you are able for sure, but don’t sell your soul to do so. And don’t pretend to be who you are not, while you are trying to become who you may not become. Final thoughts as I ponder this proverb.

*Lord, thank You for the life You have given me to life. You have blessed me and my family and I am grateful. I pray with thanksgiving that You led me to be conservative with what You have given me. I pray for wisdom to continue in Your wisdom and grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

### **Thursday, July 19: Proverbs 14- Some days God is tough on me...**

Two very different proverbs caught my attention. I guess I will ponder one for a bit then the other.

*A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones (30).* I have been doing a lot of walking lately, part of my recovery prescription for a recent surgery. Since I walk about 9 miles a day and 4+ miles at a time I have been on most every road within 2 miles of my home. Some of the homes I walk by are quite something, I'd guess 4-5,000 square feet. Because of a bridge being repaired I walk through a club with tennis courts, pool and other amenities that is the private club for the families living in that particular subdivision. The community is tree lined, manicured laws and beautiful... beyond nice. Walking in places like this, can easily draw envy to run wild.

One thing I have learned in life is that envy robs joy for what you do have. The proverb is correct *envy rots the bones!* I think the writer's point is I have a choice, I don't have to go down the envy road. I can live at peace with what I have. I can even be delighted for what other people have, particularly when they have more than me and more of things I would like to have. *A heart at peace* can do this.

Second proverb: *Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God (31).* This proverb troubled me greatly, specifically with regard to the way my own country has been treating poor families who have come into our country illegally. Separating children from families... oh, how this pains me. I don't mean for this blog to get political, but this is where my mind and thoughts went. It just destroys me that we in this country would do this. I know I am not doing this oppression, but my country is and I am wondering if I am complicit???

I realize that the proverb seems to be speaking to individuals and not nations. Then again 3 proverbs later I read this. *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people (34).* Seems to me what were doing to these families is not righteous. I don't believe God is smiling.

The first proverb called me to introspection. The second (and third) led me to tears...

A stern day in God's Word...

*Oh, God... I don't even know how I should pray. Accept my wordless silence and my tear filled eyes as my prayer. Through Christ, my Lord, I pray. Amen.*

### **Friday, July 20: Proverbs 15- How much do you value a peace-filled life?...**

What is the value of peace and harmony at home and in life? That's where my thoughts traveled, sparked by verse 17. *Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred.*

Finance and wealth can be a tremendous blessing in life. Wealth brings privilege. But wealth and privilege do not automatically bring peace and joy in life.

Verse 17 above speaks to an important aspect of life... what value do you place on harmony and love? I have heard too many stories of wealthy couples who endure an acrimonious divorce, in order to separate. Does it happen to everyone who has wealth? No, absolutely not. But no amount of money can make those acrimonious situations palatable. I think that is the point of verse 17. Peace, harmony and love in your life and family is a gift that surpasses one's bank account.

The proverb is not suggesting that poverty automatically brings love and peace. There can be tremendous pressure with poverty. But who goes to bed dreaming of becoming poor? No one. And no one aspires to being poor. People do, however, aspire and dream of being wealthy, hence

the proverb. It is countering our natural impulses for riches, reminding us that riches do not automatically bring love, peace and harmony.

The question the proverb is asking of me goes like this. Am I striving for more and greater wealth at the expense of quality of life?

If I slip my eyes up one verse, another question comes to mind. Am I striving for more and greater wealth at the expense of my relationship with the Lord? (16: *Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.*)

Two questions worth pondering...

*Lord, thank You for all You have provided for me and my family. We are so blessed by You. Lord, may I never set my eyes on wealth, losing sight of You. You are the greatest gift You have ever given me. Help me keep this perspective. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, July 21: Proverbs 16- Our words...**

Many themes fill the pages of proverbs. Today I was captured by verse 28 and the power that our words carry to advance good or stir evil.

*A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.*

Words carry immense power. They can obliterate like a nuclear bomb or inspire like a great work of art. Most words fall somewhere in between these extremes.

This proverb is inviting me to consider my words, how I use them and what effect they have on others...

Every time I ready my tongue to speak I have a choice to make, curse or bless, inspire or destroy, harm or help.

Take heed, before you next speak...

*Lord, at Your inspiration, James reminds his readers how difficult it is to tame one's tongue (James 3). Still I pray, help me to bridle my tongue that it might speak life and not death. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.*

### **Sunday, July 22, 2018, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@pcogonline.org](mailto:office@pcogonline.org).*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.