



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Win the Day!

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Wisdom, as it's presented in the Old Testament is never about the individual. It's never about just me living skillfully by myself. When we're home alone, it's not too hard to be skillful. But it's always about the community; it's about relationship; it's about learning to live skillfully in the context of relationships, especially with those with whom we disagree. If you're serious about living skillfully, the Proverbs again and again hits on two major themes. Both of these themes are prominent in Proverbs, Chapter 10. One is what I do with my *mouth*; the other is what I do with my *money*—mouth and money!

If you have a Bible, turn with us to Proverbs, Chapter 10. Now starting in chapter 10—in what is considered the body of Proverbs—it's much more random than the first nine chapters. If you just want to go in, grab a proverb and talk about it, it's not that complicated. But we're trying to catch these big themes and create sort of a framework. Really, my goal would be to explain the big themes and ideas of Proverbs in such a way, that when you read Proverbs, it makes more sense to you. But it becomes difficult to try to figure out how to organize and present it, and so we're going to talk about the two major themes. There's no way we can hit all 32 verses. I'm just going to pick the verses that I think represent the themes of the chapter.

So, with that in mind, Chapter 10, Verse 1:

The proverbs of Solomon.

A wise son makes a father glad,

But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

Ill-gotten gains do not profit,

But righteousness delivers from death.

The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger,

But He will reject the craving of the wicked.

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,

But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,

But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. (*NASB, Proverbs 10:1-5)

So, the beginning, the proverbs of Solomon, is kind of an introduction. This is the body of the book of Proverbs. There's no real meaning behind father or mother in the sense that it's different; it's just kind of a poetic way of making a point. It's also helpful to understand, in the ancient world, a lot of life was lived in your family—your extended family, your clan—much more so than what we think of as cities and communities. Therefore, a lot of the skillful living

was within the context of family or clan. So, the proverb basically opens, by saying someone who acts wisely, lives skillfully, actually brings joy to the community, but somebody that lives foolishly brings grief to the community. It's a reminder that we're all in this together. Every individual's behavior affects the whole. Starting then in Verse 2, it's really talking about two themes: how you view money and how you view work, and whether or not you view them through the eyes of the wise, or through the eyes of the foolish—whether you're counted among the wicked, or whether you're counted among the righteous.

Again, defining terms is critical. The righteous are not like righteous in the book of Romans, which is positional righteousness in Christ, but rather it's about behavior, and simply stated, those who care about *shalom*, about mutual flourishing, and are willing to disadvantage themselves at times in order to advantage the greater community. That's the essence of being counted among the righteous. Those who are counted among the wicked aren't necessarily those that are evil—it's really helpful to keep that in mind—but rather those who are selfish and self-centered, in the sense that, "I'm in it for me and, if necessary, I will disadvantage the community, do violence to the community, in order to advantage myself."

So, with that in mind, Verse 2 talks about ill-gotten gains. That's not referring to stealing or something illegal. Literally, the Hebrew is the *treasure of the wicked*. Most of your Bibles probably footnote that. If you remember the definition of *the wicked*, what it's talking about are treasures that you have collected, on the basis of disadvantaging others, in order to advantage yourself. And ultimately, what it says then is: *it does not profit*. This message is repeated again and again and again through the book of Proverbs, that when everyone is in it for themselves, and it's all about me - I will disadvantage whoever I need to, to gain for myself - it ultimately does violence to the concept of *shalom*, and creates a culture that will cannibalize itself. At the end of the day, there are no winners. The community can't flourish; it's not a sustainable model, and eventually it all implodes. Selfish greed will ultimately destroy us and that's what it's talking about. So, if you are a business owner for example, if your primary driving passion is to make money, then it's likely you're going to disadvantage others, in order to advantage yourself. You're going to disadvantage your employees...your vendors...your customers. You're going to do whatever is necessary, in order to gain on the bottom line, and ultimately, what you're doing, is disadvantaging others in order to advantage yourself. That's what he's talking about.

The contrast in Verse 2: But righteousness delivers from death. Delivers from death isn't talking about literal, physical death, but death to *shalom*, death to flourishing. What is the way out of a culture that is cannibalizing itself? The answer is: it's a complete change in the fundamental core belief of people—that what matters most is mutual flourishing—God's vision for *shalom*. And so, the way out, is to think, "I'm not in this to advantage myself, but I'm in this to figure out, what is my role in creating *shalom* so we can all gain together, so we can all flourish together?" That completely changes how I view my employees...my vendors....my competition. It changes my view on everything. We always need to remind ourselves, that just because something is legal, doesn't mean it's morally right. We are called as the righteous to think about: what is my part in creating *shalom*? All of this goes back to Genesis Chapter Two, goes back to the idea of The Garden, and our responsibility to be managers or stewards of The Garden. Sin has taken its toll; the world is fallen; it's kind of a selfish, cannibalizing-type culture, but how can I contribute to the concept of *shalom*? How can I make a difference?

So, Verse 3: the LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger. Hunger is not just referring to physically being hungry, but it's a poetic way of referring to the needs and desires within you. In other words, everybody's soul longs for peace and they long for safety, security, happiness and joy. No matter who you are, ultimately that's what your soul longs for and what the proverb is saying is that's what *shalom* delivers. That's what *shalom* is about. It's figuring out: how do we flourish together to satisfy those longings in our souls? The second part of Verse 3 is the idea of the wicked: I'm in it for myself; those cravings, longings, and desires can never be satisfied.

Starting in Verse 4, it shifts the discussion a little bit to the idea of work and labor and working together. Verse 4 is talking about the lazy, when it talks about the negligent hand. The Hebrew is literally the *limp wrist*. In the ancient world, pretty much everything was about physical labor, and it's the idea of somebody that's just lazy. They won't do their part, and ultimately what they're doing, is breaking down *shalom*. They're advantaging themselves by disadvantaging everybody else. Even though they're physically capable of doing their part, they just choose not to, and rather than being givers, they're takers. They expect everybody else to disadvantage themselves, in order to advantage *me*, and that starts to break down the idea of flourishing and *shalom*. The contrast to that, of course, would be the hard worker, where everybody's willing to do his or her part.

So, think of it like this: If you really don't have a correct worldview, if you don't have a vision for *shalom* as God intended it to be, then, for you, work is nothing more than a necessity to get a paycheck. So, it's likely you'll do as little as possible, in order to just get the paycheck—that's all it is to you. That's really different than understanding the Bible has a high value on work ethic. It's the idea that work is good and it's right and it's noble. We work, because we're people made in the image of God. We work, because God worked. There was work to be done in The Garden, before sin ever entered the picture, and there will be work to be done in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Work gives meaning and purpose; it is part of what makes life good and noble and gives us dignity. But work is also about our contribution to *shalom*. We're all in this together, and what is my part and how can I help? How can I be part of this? Again, it's back to tending The Garden. What is my part? What is my contribution? How can I be part of helping create a culture or community, where everyone flourishes? Certainly, work goes beyond just what I can get paid for. When you go home from work, there's work to be done at home, work with your family, work with your friends, work in the community. All of that needs to be run through the grid: what is my part in contributing to the *shalom* of the community and why does that matter?

So, it's interesting in Verse 5, when he's talking about a son who gathers or works hard during the summer, is going to reap a harvest, and that's the one who acts wisely. So, you would think at the end of Verse Five, the contrast would be one who acts foolishly, and that's the one who sleeps through the harvest. The lazy son during the harvest time—the most important time—is just oversleeping every day and not doing his part. But it doesn't say wise and *foolish*, it says wise and *shameful*. Shameful is a Hebrew word that really captures the context of the community. It's the idea that that doesn't just hurt you. We're in this together, and it actually affects everyone in the community, so there's a shame factor that you do damage to all of us.

You affect all of us, because of your unwillingness to enter in and do your part to create a flourishing community.

So, Verses 1 through 5 basically capture this theme that's repeated again and again in Proverbs—the importance of a strong work ethic and being thoughtful about what you do with your money. Is it ultimately about how much money you can store up, or is it about realizing this is my stewardship of *shalom* in our community, and what does God expect of me?

That then is kind of repeated in Verse 15:

The rich man's wealth is his fortress,
The ruin of the poor is their poverty.

Basically, what happens when everybody's in it for themselves, is you end up with the rich and you end up with the poor. You end up with those who disadvantage others to advantage themselves— they're kind of the winners so to speak—and then you have those who have been used and abused and cast aside. They're the losers, and eventually a culture cannibalizes itself; it doesn't flourish, and everybody loses. So, the rich think, "This is my safety; this is my security; this is my significance, my value," while the poor get stuck in their poverty, and the culture just kind of disintegrates.

Verse 16 then is the correction to that: The wages of the righteous is life. Again the righteous would be the *tzadik*, the one who wants to see everyone flourish, the one who is thinking of his or her business as, "This is my stewardship; this is how I tend The Garden; this is my way of helping everyone flourish," and what it says is *the wages of the righteous is life*. That's *shalom*, the contrast to death. This is God's vision; this is what God wants. So rather than a culture where there are winners and losers, it's the concept of creating a culture where everyone flourishes. We're in this together, and that's where life is found, and where we find what our souls long for. That's where we find trust - we find safety, security, prosperity—flourishing, which is what everyone wants.

Now there's no question this is complicated, if you start to think of it on a world scale, on a national scale, on a city scale; it's pretty overwhelming. So, start with *your* scale. In other words, wherever you find yourself, what is *your* part in tending The Garden, in contributing to the flourishing of your community? —because it's got to start in pockets like that.

The contrast in Verse 16: the income of the wicked is punishment. Again, this is a theme that's recycled throughout Proverbs—that when everybody's in it for themselves, everybody's taking, nobody's giving, everybody's advantaging themselves by disadvantaging others, ultimately the culture cannibalizes itself and ultimately everyone loses.

Then, go to Verse 28:

The hope of the righteous is gladness,

The hope is what's in the future; it's something that's assured. It's the idea that the vision of the righteous is full of hope; it's full of joy; it's full of gladness. It is the value system that

ultimately will prevail when the New Heaven and the New Earth is ushered in. It will be the fulfillment of God's vision for *shalom*. So, you think about all of the anxiety, all of the fear, all of the concerns in our culture today. People's souls long for something different. The vision of *shalom*, a vision of mutual flourishing—we're all in this together; how we make it happen—is filled with hope. If we can find that in pockets and begin to make that happen, it's a very compelling message.

But the expectation of the wicked perishes.

In other words, people that are in it for themselves ultimately cannibalize the culture; everyone loses; there's no hope in that message.

The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright. (Vs. 29)

The way of the LORD would be the world as God intended it to be. There are moral laws, just like there are physical laws, social laws, and spiritual laws, that God has put in place, and when you violate those laws, you suffer the consequences. Wisdom is not trying to get reality to adjust to your belief system. Wisdom—skillful living—is trying to get your belief system to adjust to reality, in other words to get in alignment with God's laws, in order to experience the flourishing that God intended. That's what he means when he says,

The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright
But ruin to the workers of iniquity.
The righteous will never be shaken,
But the wicked will not dwell in the land. (Vs. 29-30)

One of the ways to think about how the story ends: it ends with judgment; it ends with the New Heaven and the New Earth. One of the ways to view that is, ultimately, *shalom* wins! The very essence of the New Heaven and the New Earth is a place where everyone flourishes together, and for those that are in alignment with that—the righteous—that's what the future holds. Those that are determined to do violence to *shalom*, ultimately, they are removed; they are set aside; they are moved out of the way, in order for God's vision to ultimately triumph.

Proverbs has a lot to say about how we view money and work in light of *shalom*. Proverbs talks a lot about this concept of *shalom*, or mutual flourishing, and both money and work are a big part of that. If you were with us in our study of Genesis, you remember that we as people are made in the image of God, and that's why we work. We don't work because of The Fall. We work because God works. It's what gives life dignity and meaning and purpose. We worked before The Fall and we'll work in the New Heaven and the New Earth, so it's worth thinking about that as our contribution to the flourishing of a community. There has to be some motive behind work, beyond making money. Otherwise, it just becomes either idolatry or drudgery, but stop and think about, how does your work contribute to *shalom*? How does it contribute to flourishing?

Maybe you're a mechanic, or you work in a car dealership, or body and paint, or something. In a community like ours, if you don't have a working car, a working vehicle, it's pretty hard to keep a job, and everything goes downhill pretty fast from there. So, stop and think about all those people involved

in treating people rightly and fairly, to make sure they have a decent vehicle: makes a significant contribution to *shalom*. I think about a construction worker; how many memories, how many laughs, how many moments are spent, together as family in a home? That just wouldn't be possible, if somebody wasn't building the home and wiring the home and plumbing the home.

So, to think of your job as contributing to that - maybe you work in a restaurant and you're maybe a cook or a waiter or waitress. I mean, how many first dates are in restaurants, and how many anniversaries, and how many birthdays, and how many special moments, as people sit across the table from one another? Those aren't possible without people making a contribution to that. So, it's good, just to think about what it is you do, and how that contributes to the greater *shalom* or the community. We live in a very selfish, self-centered, individualistic culture. And ultimately, that's a culture that will destroy itself. There's no chance for *shalom*, when everyone in it is for himself or herself. So, I like to think of ways in this life that we create at least glimpses of the world as God intended it to be, little glimpses of *shalom*, which create platforms from which we can share the Gospel of Jesus. So that's my encouragement to you today, to think about it. How can you contribute to *shalom* today?