

MONDAY, November 16, 2009:

QUOTE: *"The difference between the fool and the wise man is that the former thinks only of his next meal, the latter thinks of his last meal."*

RE: Proverbs 20:5

I feel a certain urgency today as I write this devotional. I feel an urgency to remind someone to stop and think about what you're doing! In this busy world in which we live, it is so easy to operate on auto-pilot and impulse. We can get so caught up in the middle of a heated situation that we do things and say things that we would never do in a quieter and more saner moment.

The danger is that we can get so busy or emotionally charged that we don't take the time to really think about what we're doing and the potential consequences (the trajectory of our lives).

Today's proverb is a reminder to reflect on all the wise counsel that has been put into our heart over the years and weigh the urgent tasks and situations of the day in light of that collective wisdom.

Remember, God has known you and cared about you all your life. You may not have been aware of it, but He has orchestrated the experiences of your life to prepare you for this day. He has intentionally put people in your life over the years to deposit wise counsel in your heart. He has turned your heart to key scriptures through the years that are for today. So, stop! Take the time to think – to draw out the deep waters of wise counsel that are within you. I don't want you to be swept away on the fast rapids of today's busyness and stress.

SCRIPTURE: John 7:37-38, Hebrews 4:11-13

TUESDAY, November 17, 2009:

QUOTE: *"Marriage: it starts when you sink into his arms and ends with your arms in his sink."*

RE: Proverbs 24:3

My prayer today is that everyone reading this devotional will take a moment and truly hear the message of today's proverb. Read it slow and notice, first, what it does not say. It doesn't say that complaining and criticizing builds a house. It does not say that money and possessions build a house. However, it does say that through wisdom a house is built.

It is a sad truth that most people seldom intentionally study their marriage. They seldom if ever take the time to ask God to teach them how to be a wise member of the household. Having been married myself for thirty-one years and having worked with many marriages as a pastor, the sad truth is that most problems that occur within a marriage are simply because people were acting unwisely.

So you may ask, "How do you establish a home?" In other words, what is the secret to making a marriage last? The answer is by being understanding. Remember, we all have faults, weaknesses, and bad days. Don't be so quick to complain, instead be understanding. Remember, you can preserve things with vinegar, but it sure is bitter.

SCRIPTURE: James 3:13-18, I Peter 3:1-12

WEDNESDAY, November 18, 2009:

QUOTE: *"No matter what you teach your children, they insist on behaving like you."*
_John Maxwell

RE: Proverbs 29:15

There has probably been no other Biblical concept that has been misunderstood any more than the "spare the rod, spoil the children" mindset. Actually, the previous statement is true, but how you define "rod" makes all the difference in the world.

The "rod" that is talked about in the book of Proverbs is the "shepherd's rod." I imagine that Solomon heard his father talk about the shepherd's rod many times, for David was a shepherd as a young man and then carried that same mindset over into leading God's people (Israel).

What is important to remember is that the shepherd's rod was not a tool to beat the sheep but to lead the sheep. Jack Hayford in his book, *Blessing Your Children* captures the essence of this concept: *"The rod does not refer to a board, a whip or any implement that would cause injury. Instead, the rod refers to something more on the order of a shepherd's instrument of care – a symbol of firm government, serious instruction, careful explanation, strict lines drawn, full obedience expected, and penalties measured firmly when violation takes place. It is the opposite of neglect, and it has nothing to do with beating, screaming, hitting, brutalizing, bullying or arguing. It is love in action – the use of words and acts that will give the child understanding and extend meaningful care for the child's well-being and security through it all."*

My prayer is that God will give us a shepherd's heart. Just think what a difference you could make if you approached your relationship with children (and all people) with a mind to care for them and lead them to greener pastures. May it be so, in Jesus' name.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 23:4

THURSDAY, November 19, 2009: **QUOTE:** *"Friendship isn't a big thing-it's a million little things."*
_Anonymous

RE: Proverbs 19:6

Today I want to encourage you to buy friends. Yes, you heard me right – "Buy friends." I know we've heard all our lives that you shouldn't try to buy friends, but this proverb begs the difference.

Remember, you are buying something with your money. Many try to buy happiness, status, respect and pleasure; but why not friends? The wise way to "buy friends" is to invest in people. You are not trying to win their favor or approval – that will attract people that are for sale (not much loyalty there!). But when you invest in people's lives, when you choose to bless people for no other reason than you care about them, a wonderful thing happens – they become a friend.

We live in a lonely and detracted world. It truly is a jungle out there. But in this world that operates under the principle of the "survival of the fittest" (capitalism?), wouldn't it be a blessing to have someone in your life that pours into you – not because you've earned or even deserve it, but simply because they care. Why don't you be that kind of person to someone today? Who knows, it could change the world...and for certain you will gain a friend.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:35-43 "You feed them..."