

2. Better Relationships

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Subtitle: 5 Practical Relationship Principles from God's Books of Wisdom

Over the next few weeks our messages will focus on relationships, and how we can improve our interactions with those around us (family, friends etc.)

Two statements:

- a. **The message of the entire Bible is primarily about relationships**
 - i. God created human beings because He wanted to have a relationship with us
 - ii. When man's relationship with God was broken through sin, God sent His Son Jesus to die for us so our relationship with Him could be restored
 - iii. God put His love in our hearts so we can have good relationships with one another (Rom. 5:5)

- b. **Ultimately, happiness and fulfilment in life doesn't come from having lots of stuff or high accolades for our achievements**
 - i. Happiness and fulfilment in life comes mainly from having good, strong & lasting relationships

1. Basic Relationship Principles from Proverbs & Ecclesiastes

The books of Proverbs & Ecclesiastes belong to the portion of the Bible called the "Wisdom Literature".

Much of God's practical wisdom is contained within this portion of the Bible, including God's wisdom about developing & keeping good relationships.

- There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs
- Allocate one chapter of Proverbs each day of each month
- **Reading, meditating in & applying the truths of one chapter of Proverbs per day would improve our daily lives dramatically**

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 (NKJV) *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one*

be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

- Ecclesiastes promotes relationships with others (beyond ourselves)
- Vs. 9 Two are better than one
 - *because they have a good reward for their labor*
 - *Vs. 10 ... if they fall, one will lift up his companion*
 - *... woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up*
 - *... if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone*
- Vs 12 ... *one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him*
- ... *a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

This underscores the truth of Genesis 2:18 where God says:

- *“It is not good that man should be alone”*
- God does not require that each person be married, but he strongly counsels us to be in relationship with others.

2. Making & maintaining relationships requires effort on our part

Proverbs 18:1 (NKJV) *A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.*

- Sometimes people end up isolated from others through no fault of their own
- But God counsels us strongly against isolating ourselves from others
- Seeking and maintaining friendship with others is part of daily living

Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV) *A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

- The implication here is:
 - Friendly people have no difficulty in finding friends
 - Conversely, unfriendly people have difficulty making friends

The practice of friendliness and kindness forms the basis of good relationships

- This is true for:
 - Husband and wife relationships

- family relationships
- neighbourly relationships
- etc.

3. Relationships are separated by unkind & unfriendly words

Proverbs 17:9 (AMP) *He who covers and forgives an offense seeks love, but he who repeats or harps on a matter **separates even close friends.***

- True friends cover and forgive an offence
- A gossip repeats a matter over and over, & separates even close friends

Proverbs 11:13 (NKJV) *A talebearer reveals secrets, but **he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.***

- Most people have an indiscretion somewhere in their life or family history
- Talebearers (gossips) cannot wait to reveal other people's secrets
- But people of a faithful spirit conceal other people's secrets
- Certain things shouldn't be revealed or spoken about

Proverbs 19:11 (NKJV) *The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and **his glory is to overlook a transgression.***

- Overlooking a transgression isn't a weakness but a strength of the wise
- (We do not overlook things like criminal activity, family violence etc.)

Proverbs 16:28 (NLT) *A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; **gossip separates the best of friends.***

- Strife and infighting in relationships doesn't typically start out of no-where
- Usually, somebody plants seeds of strife by speaking certain words

1 Peter 4:15 (NKJV) *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a **busybody in other people's matters.***

4. Relationships are compromised by unrestrained talking

Good and frequent conversations are necessary to maintain good relationships.

However, too much talking becomes counterproductive.

Proverbs 10:19–20 (NASB) *When there are **many words**, transgression is unavoidable, but **he who restrains his lips is wise.**20 The tongue of the righteous is as **choice silver**, the heart of the wicked is worth little.*

- Those who constantly talk end up straying into transgression (sin)
- Choice silver is a precious metal because of its rarity
- In comparison, iron is cheap because of its abundance

Proverbs 17:27 (NKJV) *He who has knowledge **saves his words**, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.*

5. Avoid strife in relationships

Although there is some conflict in most relationships (all?), strife can and should be avoided.

Proverbs 10:12 (NKJV) *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.*

Proverbs 13:10 (NKJV) *By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom.*

Proverbs 11:29 (GNB) *Those who bring trouble on their families will have nothing at the end. Foolish people will always be servants to the wise.*

Proverbs 12:18 (NKJV) *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Proverbs 17:14 (NKJV) *The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.*

Proverbs 20:3 (NKJV) *It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.*

Proverbs 26:20 (NKJV) *Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.*