



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

Your words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

PROVERBS LESSON 21

This week we'll be studying Proverbs 27:1-27, and what a great chapter it is! 16 of the 27 verses refer to our relationships with others, so it's very practical. It's a chapter that isn't really "grouped" into any particular topics or any specific order, except verses 23-27. Chapter 27 is also one of Solomon's proverbs that Hezekiah's men compiled. By this chapter, as well as many others, we see that one's faith is directly related to their actions. This reminds us of James 2:20 that says, "Faith without works is dead." Faith and action are like two sides of a coin. They aren't supposed to be separate; they go together. If you have true faith, there will be works, and your life will show it. In Proverbs 27, we see that very clearly.

First Day

1. Read Proverbs 27:1-27. After you read the chapter through, list some of the topics, and the verses you can group together for the topics.
2. Are there any "new" topics that we haven't discussed yet?
3. If you had to give this chapter a title, what would it be?

We'll end here for today. I hope you're as excited about this chapter as I am! May you hear from the Lord on every verse!

Memory Verse of the Week: "As in water face reveals face, so a man's heart reveals the man." Proverbs 27:19

Second Day

What's your memory verse? Ponder its meaning.

1. Read Proverbs 27:1-27. This week we're going to look at these verses by topic as much as possible. How are verses 1 and 2 related?
2. Verse 1 reminds us of the uncertainty of life. What does James 4:13-16 say about that? Why can't we boast about what we are going to do tomorrow? Do you think pride is a factor in this verse?
3. How does this verse speak to you? What kind of "perspective" should we have on life, according to verse 1? What's your perspective? Are we not supposed to ever make plans? What's the balance?
4. How does 27:2 relate to 25:27? What are we also not supposed to "boast" about? Why is it better to let someone else praise you?

Solomon warned them that it's wrong to boast both about what you are going to do, as well as what you've done. Bridges said, "Praise is a comely garment but another must put it on you." Lane wrote, "Self-praise is the fruit of pride and self-love, which we hate in others but tolerate in ourselves." Paul wrote, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Romans 12:3). Ruthe White once wrote about how she wished others knew she wasn't as strong as everyone thought she was. She had realized that she had made herself appear as if she was a pillar of strength, hiding the fact that she was a fragile vessel, easily broken. She was afraid for others to know how easily broken and weak she was, because if they knew, perhaps they would never trust her again, or think less of her. I love the conclusion she came too. She said, "The Lord showed me that it was brokenness that I needed. I needed to lose the pieces of my own identity. Let self be lost so a new person can emerge. One that is honest, glued together with love, unafraid to be exposed and obviously human." I love the reminder that we never need to boast in ourselves, even if we've done something grand. It's God who deserves all the praise, not us! And if there is praise to be had, let someone else be the one to do it. Mark Harmon once asked his dad, Ted Harmon, who was a Heisman Trophy winner, "Why don't you ever talk about it, dad?" His dad replied, "If you're good enough, others will talk about you." So true.

5. Here is a random story of someone who tried to steal God's glory. Read Acts 12:20-23. What happened to him, as a result?

6. Do you struggle with self-love or pride? Do you often find yourself boasting of your accomplishments, possessions, or future plans? You might immediately say, "No, not me," but take some time and ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart on this one.

7. Read Proverbs 27:3-4. Verse 3 tells us that a fool's wrath provokes for no reason, so the wise man should try not to react to it. Verse 4, one of the few rhetorical questions in Proverbs, tells us that jealousy is even worse than wrath and anger. Why?

8. What other verses warn us about the danger of jealousy? Why does it do so much harm among Christians? What happened to Jesus because of it, according to Matthew 27:18?

9. Do you tend to be a jealous person? Has jealousy ever ruined one of your relationships? Are you jealous of someone right now? What should you do? (How does jealousy hinder your spiritual growth?)

10. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. What does Paul say about real love?

Spend some time asking God to search your heart for any jealousy or envy, and then confess it and repent! It's an ugly, deadly sin, isn't it? Often times it's lurking there under an "assumed" name, like anger, irritation, or self-righteousness. Let's call it like it is, shall we?

Third Day

Work on your memory verse; it's a good one!

1. Read Proverbs 27:1-27, focusing on verses 5-6. What do these verses tell us about relationships? How can "open rebuke" be a mark of love and friendship?

It is said that confrontation done in the right way for the right reason is a high act of love. A friend whose intentions are pure and loving can be trusted and respected. Proverbs 24:26 said, "One who gives an honest answer gives a kiss on the lips." So true. Henry Ward Beech said, "To speak painful truth through loving words - that is friendship." Here are a few more great quotes on this subject:

"Friends, if we be honest with ourselves, we shall be honest with each other."
(George MacDonald)

"To throw away an honest friend, as it were, is to throw your life away."
(Sophocles)

"A friend will tell you the truth. Even when it hurts. Even when the truth threatens your friendship. Because she knows that there is no real friendship without truth."
(Sarah Mueller)

"Everyone needs some friends around who will say, 'You are wrong!' And that includes me. I really value the friendship of people who'll just tell me like it is."
(Billy Graham)

2. What kind of friend are you? Are you a faithful friend, one who tells the truth, one who desires the best for your friend? How can you grow in this area?

3. Read Matthew 26:49. How is this an example of Proverbs 27:5-6, in a negative way?

4. Have you had any friends that have given you "the kisses of an enemy"? How did you respond? Have you ever been that kind of friend?

Many of us have been hurt in the past by people we thought were friends, but turned out to be nothing of the kind. But we have two choices, we either hold on to unforgiveness and bitterness, or we forgive them and move on. Alexander Pope

reminds us that "to err is human, to forgive divine." That's so true, because God can work love and forgiveness in our hearts towards those who have wronged us. We are forgiven by the standard by which we forgive, which reminds us how important it is to offer forgiveness to those who've hurt us, whether they are really sorry or not. We need to be "ready to forgive" like God Himself is! (Psalm 86:5) An old Turkish proverb said, "Who seeks a faultless friend remains friendless." That's a good one. Sorry, but I have to give you one more ... "Every person should keep a fair-sized cemetery lot in which to bury the faults of friends." (Henry Ward Beecher) How big is your cemetery?

5. Read Proverbs 27:7-8. What do you think Solomon is saying?

6. Read 27:9 and 17. How do these verses relate to verses 5 and 6? How does friendship need both rebuke and encouragement? How does "iron sharpen iron"?

7. Are you the kind of friend that can discuss your opinions with your friends without getting angry when they don't share your opinion? Are you teachable as you debate or discuss? Do you sharpen others and do you allow yourself to be sharpened by them as well?

8. Read 27:10. This verse isn't trying to discourage family ties, but exalt long term friendships. Many times family lives far, so a friend needs to step in. What is the essence of this verse?

9. Some say this verse is calling us to "celebrate old friends." That's kind of sweet! What's the best way to "keep" old friends? How can you celebrate them?

10. Are you willing to be "like family" to someone who has none nearby? What sacrifice does that sometimes call for? Are you willing to do that?

See you tomorrow, friends. Remember that old Girl Scout song ... "Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other's gold." Think about that ...

Fourth Day

Work on your verse today.

1. Read Proverbs 27:11. This is the only verse in chapters 25-29 that uses the phrase, "my son." What's Solomon saying? Why does having a wise son help a man answer accusations against him?

2. Read Proverbs 27:12. What is this verse saying about danger and protection?

3. Read Proverbs 27:13-22. What principle is Solomon talking about in verse 14?

4. What about in verses 15-16? How is restraining an irritable and quarrelsome wife like trying to restrain the wind or pick up a handful of oil?

Verses 14-16 are really talking about a lack of sensitivity to others, just using different examples. Timing and sensitivity is lacking when one irritates someone else in the morning. I have to confess that I am guilty of this one. I have always been up the earliest in my household, and by the time the family gets up, I'm going a mile a minute. I am the one with the loud voice who is too "cheery" when they are still half asleep. Although I've always laughed about it, I see from this verse, that it's really selfish and insensitive to the rest of the family. And the quarrelsome, nagging wife is being insensitive to everyone else around her as well. Sadly, I must accept guilt for that one too. I can be very quarrelsome when I want to be, and Solomon is right. You can restrain me about as much as you can restrain the wind! Ouch!!

5. What about you? Are you sensitive to others or do you tend to be more self-focused as you go through your day? (I don't think this verse just applies to how we wake people up in the morning!)

Some commentators believe that verse 14 is warning us about flattery; one who is over zealous in their praise of you, loudly pouring out blessings and acts of kindness on you, to butter you up. Perhaps the person has an ulterior motive or wants something from you. I'm not sure I go along with that translation, although it's an interesting thought, as well as a good warning.

6. Verse 18 refers again to work. What principle is he reminding us of? How does it refer to faithfulness and diligence?

I love what Hubbard points out about this small, seemingly insignificant verse. He writes, "It is the one who watches the needs of his master that will be esteemed, respected, and honored. The illustration of this is drawn from the persistence and patience of the orchard keeper who faithfully plants, cultivates, waters, prunes, and protects from animals and birds the fledgling tree for a period of several years. Then at last he is able to "eat its fruit." No denial of the tedium; no ignoring of the toil. Every job has its menial sides. All of us who see ourselves

as servants know that. Let the 'fig tree' remind us to stay with the most repetitive and boring work and it will ultimately bear its fruit; the Master's approval."

7. How do you handle "work" when it becomes tedious and boring? Do you murmur and complain, or do you commit it to the Lord, continue on, knowing that sooner or later, you will eat of "its fruit"?

8. What is verse 19 saying, in your own words? How does this verse speak to your own heart? What does your heart, mind, or words say about you?

9. Verse 20 is a sobering one. How is hell and the eyes of man "never satisfied?"

10. In verse 21, we see that heat tests and refines both silver and gold, revealing what they are really like. Most commentators think the second line of this verse reads "a man is tested by" and think it means that we are tested by how we receive the praise of others. How can that show what kind of person we really are?

11. How do you receive praise? Does it humble you or puff you up?

12. Let's end today by looking at verse 22, which is another sad one. Why is it so hard to separate a fool from his foolishness?

Tomorrow we'll finish up this chapter by looking at a word that Proverbs talks a lot about. Diligence. *Get ready for more heart surgery!*

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Today let's finish up by reading Proverbs 27:23-27. Remember that Israel was an agricultural society and that Solomon would use examples and analogies they would relate to. Try to imagine that you are a farmer back then. What is Solomon warning against?
2. Why does a farmer care for his flocks so diligently? Why is this so important?
3. I think there are a few lessons taught in this section. What do you think it says about stewardship over what the Lord has entrusted us with?

4. Are you a good steward of what you've been given? Do you know the state of your flocks? Do you take care of what you have, and do you recognize that it's all God's?

5. These verses also exhort us not to be lazy. Laziness has severe consequences. What can happen if a farmer becomes lazy?

6. Are you lazy? Do you tend to "let things go" or do you stay on top of things at work and around the house? Do you procrastinate, which is another form of laziness?

7. I like how he says to "Be diligent and know the state of our flocks." Could our "flocks" be our homes? If so, are you aware of the needs of your family members? Do you know the "comings and goings" of each person? Proverbs 31:27 tells us that she "watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness." Would that describe you? Not in a controlling way, but in a nurturing way. This would include knowing the needs of your spouse, not only your children.

8. What verse or topic in this chapter specifically spoke to your heart and challenged you? Are there any changes you plan to make as a result?

God bless you, and may you see how many **"Reasons to Rejoice"** you have every day!