

Proverbs 18:1-24
“*Wisdom in Relationships*”

INTRO.

The last time we were together we covered (Proverbs 17)...

- By focusing our study on how practical wisdom is.
- We learned that wisdom becomes visible in ordinary relationships.

AND...

- We walked away understanding...
 - That wisdom is NOT something that stays trapped in our mind...
 - Rather it's revealed in who we become.

NOW...

- Track with me on ONE of the themes in Proverbs:
 - (Proverbs 17) tells when a friend loves – (*at all times*).
 - (Proverbs 18) tells what a true friend does – (*sticks close*).

CAPTURE THE BROAD SCOPE OF WISDOM HERE:

- Wisdom changes the way I listen...
 - Wisdom changes the way I speak...
 - Wisdom changes the way I relate.

STUDY

(v.1) IS VERY INTERESTING – “*A man who isolates himself...*”

THIS VERSE...

- Introduces something we're going to come back to.

IDEA #1 – WISDOM LISTENS BEFORE IT SPEAKS

(v.2) “*A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart.*”

The fool isn't necessarily someone who has nothing to say.

- He may have plenty to say.
 - His problem is that he doesn't want to understand anyone else.

Fools have “closed minds” & “open mouths”...

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- There's no desire to gain knowledge or understanding...
 - This person only wants to express his own position.

(v.13) “*He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.*”

This type of foolish person constantly:

- Interrupts
- Hears half the story
- AND forms opinions before getting the facts.

HERE'S OUR LESSON:

- **Listening is more than waiting for your turn to talk.**

(v.17) adds another dimension:

*“The first one to plead his cause seems right,
until his neighbor comes and examines him.”*

Here's how to remember this:

- **Don't confuse the first story you hear with the whole story.**

This is super practical wisdom...

- Because we live in an environment where we're...
 - Constantly being presented with *one side* of something.

(v.15) gives the positive side:

*“The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”*

HERE'S THE WISDOM:

- The fool enters a conversation wanting to be heard.
 - But the wise person enters a conversation wanting to understand.

IDEA #2 – WISDOM UNDERSTANDS THE POWER OF WORDS

(v.21) “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue...*”

Solomon isn't saying our words possess some mystical creative power.

- He's describing the enormous capacity of speech...
 - To produce consequences.

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WE KNOW THE POWER OF WORDS!

In (v.8) gossip is attractive AND that’s why it spreads so fast.

We don’t usually gossip about boring things.

- Gossip offers information that feels interesting / secret / or scandalous.

WE **LEARNED** A GREAT PRINCIPLE IN (Proverbs 17)

- *Gossip requires an audience & slander requires listeners.*

STICK WITH ME CHURCH...

(Proverbs 18) takes it a step further:

- Gossip doesn't merely pass through our ears...
 - It gets inside us and affects how we see another person.
- **Gossip doesn’t merely tell me something about someone...**
 - **It can change the lens through which I see them.**

Someone tells you something negative about another person...

- AND suddenly you begin interpreting that person...
 - Through what you've heard about them.

That's why gossip can damage relationships...

- Between people who weren’t even in the conflict.

Notice the connection back in (vv.6-7):

Words (contentions) → conflict (blows) → consequences (destruction).

SO... IT CULMINATES IN (v.21)... WORDS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.

- *“Life and death are in the power of the tongue...”*

HERE’S SOME APPLICATION:

Before I speak *wisdom asks*:

- Where are MY words going to take this relationship?

(Eph. 4:29) NLT

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“Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”

That’s NT language for the wisdom of (Proverbs 18)

IDEA #3 – WISDOM VALUES HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

I THINK IT’S IMPORTANT TO SAY...

- Wisdom doesn’t run from relationships.
 - Wisdom protects relationships.
 - AND wisdom invests in relationships.

BACK AT (v.1)...

- Solomon isn’t condemning **solitude**.
 - Jesus withdrew from people at times to pray.

HERE’S THE ISSUE...

- This verse is calling out self-centered isolation...
 - That rejects counsel and community.
- There's a difference between... “I need some time alone.”
 - AND... “I don't need anybody.”

Isolation can make us increasingly convinced...

- That our perspective is the only perspective.

(v.1) pictures someone who separates himself...

- In order to pursue his own desires...
 - And in doing so... rejects sound wisdom.

HERE’S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN MOTION:

Isolation affects **listening**.

Poor listening affects **speaking**.

Poor speaking damages **relationships**.

(v.19) *“A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city...”*

Once relational walls go up...

- They can become extremely difficult to tear down.

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PRACTICALLY... WE NEED TO ASK...

- Am I building walls where God wants me to build bridges?

(v.24) *“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*

Our culture gives us more connections than ever—

- But connections aren't necessarily friendships.

Followers aren't necessarily friends.

- Contacts aren't necessarily community.

You can know hundreds of people and still have no one who truly knows you.

Biblical friendship involves loyalty / presence / faithfulness / and truth.

- That's the kind of friend Proverbs calls us to become.

~ IN CLOSING ~

Wisdom is easy to talk about in theory.

- But relationships reveal whether we're actually living it out.

How well do you listen?

What are your words producing?

What kind of friend are you becoming?

REMEMBER...

- **Wisdom changes how you LISTEN.**
- **Wisdom changes how you SPEAK.**
- **Wisdom changes how you RELATE.**