

The first proverb to be written by King Solomon. In Hebrew literature these proverbs written by Solomon are called Mashals

“A Mashal (Hebrew: מִשָּׁל) is a short parable with a moral lesson or religious allegory, called a nimshal. "Mashal" is used also to designate other forms in rhetoric, such as the fable and apothegm.”

The idea of Solomon’s proverbs is to teach wisdom through short points and principles, the wisdom that God gave him. However they should not be regarded as “laws”, but rather advice.

Solomon states the purpose of his proverbs in chapter 1 v 2-6:

To know wisdom and instruction,
To perceive the words of understanding,
To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, judgment, and equity;
To give prudence to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion—
A wise man will hear and increase learning,
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and an enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles.

“To know wisdom”: It is helpful to remember the difference between wisdom and knowledge. One may have knowledge without wisdom. Knowledge is the collection of facts; wisdom is the right use of what we know for daily living.

“To perceive”

“To receive”

King Solomon uses a triplet here to really emphasise the purpose of his proverbs. To share his God-given wisdom.

In fact it’s a common technique that he uses in the proverbs, we see another example in the following sentence; “Justice, judgement, equity”.

“To give prudence to the simple”: The simple one here is the uneducated and those that need instruction. The wisdom of these proverbs will make the young, inexperienced one know what to do and how to do it in life. It will “give the young man knowledge and discretion”.

One characteristic of the simple is that they are gullible/naive. “The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.” (Proverbs 14:15)

“A wise man will hear and increase learning”: The Book of Proverbs is not only for the simple and inexperienced. Even a wise man will find much to help and guide him, if he will only open his ears and hear. These proverbs are designed to assist everyone, the simple, the youth and the wise men/women. For “even a man of understanding can attain wise counsel” from Proverbs.

Reading and studying this book of proverbs there is an endless supply of wise sayings and advice that we can still relate to in this modern era. It is fitting that I am delivering today’s class on the highlighted sentence “To the young man knowledge and discretion”, for this is the stage that I am

currently going through, the stage of youth, the stage of inexperience. But of course we can all relate to this as we all go through it. It's the stage that one needs guidance the most. Left unguided, youths will develop like those from Bethel that mocked the prophet Elisha when he came to their city "go away baldy, we don't want you here".

Proverbs 17:25

"A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him."

However, this is Solomon's wisdom below (1:8,9)

"Listen, my child, to the instruction from your father,
and do not forsake the teaching from your mother.
For they will be like an elegant garland on your head,
and like pendants around your neck."

This is more than just poetry, the language used creates imagery as well which helps drive home the message.

Ephesians 6:1-4

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, **but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**"

Key message in bold.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment."

1 Timothy 4:12

"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

Matthew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

There are plenty more quotes I could share that provide clear guidance and wisdom that all of us would benefit from, not just the young man. As we have already read "A wise man will hear and increase learning"

Looking more closely at the word "discretion", this is a powerful word, there is almost no scenario where being discrete would be a negative thing and yet it is something that we often fail at.

Matthew 18:15-17 tells us how to act discreetly in the scenario of a sinning brother.

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse

to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 7:1-6

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ...

Act with discretion and humility.

Psalm 112:5

“A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.”

When you see someone in need, a good man will show favour and help his neighbour, but he should not look to seek fame or status from good deeds.

Matthew 6:3

“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”.

Jesus himself told the leper he healed to not go and tell anyone that he had healed him. Luke 8:56

But why?

Of course, Jesus did not intend to keep people from coming to Him to hear Him preach the Gospel. Preaching and teaching was the reason why God sent him to the people. As Jesus says himself, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel...” (Luke 4:18).

Then why did He command that they not tell? Because he didn't want to advertise his power of healing but rather he wanted people to come to him so he could preach to them the gospel.

Being discrete is key, not only does it maintain one's integrity but it also serves to guard the person that exercises it. You wouldn't have to worry about anything coming back to bite you.

A good example we can look at today is the media, there are numerous outlets that will broadcast lies and claim its facts just to make out they have the newest news. But once the truth comes out they just look foolish and become unreliable. It's best to stay humble and be discrete until you have the facts.

Love to all,

Bro Mike