

February 5- February 11 **Theme this week--WORK**

February 5th Read Proverbs 22:17-22 The Wise know the value of skilfulness and Work

Today we want to revisit something we took a look at on January 26th. There we discussed the proverbs which speak about the scourge of laziness. Today we are looking at a very positive attribute of a good worker, *namely their skilfulness*.

1. Let's begin with a quotation from Tim Keller concerning **Proverbs 22:29**, "Another factor that promotes economic prosperity is being *skilled in [your] work*. The word *skilled* here means experienced. This is not calling for everyone to be what today we would call a professional or 'white-collar worker.' Rather, it is a call for excellence of workmanship."
2. **Q.** *What should believers be known for about their work? List three or four things.*
3. **Q.** *Is Proverbs 22:29 an absolute promise or an ordinary principle? Does this change how you see this proverb?*
4. A wonderful example and illustration of this proverb is Joseph in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:4). Maybe this is the illustration that the author had in mind! Or it could also be the skilled metal workers in Exodus 31, Bezalel and Oholiab. (JL)
5. This proverb can be applied at many levels: our normal work; our work as officers in the church; our work around our homes. Skill requires diligence and repetition, attention to detail and continued focus.
6. **Q.** *What is the chief end of man? how does this relate to this proverb?*

Prayer: *"Lord give me [us] the wisdom to seek skilfulness, but not be taken with my own cleverness. Give me the discernment to perceive excellence, but not to be enamoured of pedigree and credentials. And with this wisdom, make me a better worker, to your glory and to the good of my neighbor." Amen (TK)*

February 6th Read Proverbs 12:1-11 The Wise know the difference between work and chasing fantasies

Today we look at a single proverb which is basically repeated or occurs twice in Proverbs: **Proverbs 12:11 & Proverbs 28:19**. The NIV translates it as follows:

*"He who works his land will have abundant food,
but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment." (Proverbs 12:11 NIV)*

1. As with so much Hebrew poetry there are two parts. Here one can see Part A in the first line and the theme is work hard and you will have sufficient to eat. Part B, the

second line, speaks in contrast of someone who is out chasing silly things which amount to nothing and this shows he has no discernment or judgment. Hebrew poetry is thus often A, then B, and usually a contrast or taking something a step further, here it is a contrast.

2. The ESV translates it as “**worthless pursuits**” and the NIV “**chasing fantasies**”. Both certainly get the point across—you must make judgements in life about what you do—some things are worthless or are like a fantasy—not rooted in reality.
3. The slight difference between Prov 12:11 and Prov 28:19 occurs in Part B where 28:19 says that chasing fantasies leads to poverty.
4. **Q.** *What does idleness produce?*
5. **Q.** *Can we think we are doing something when we are doing nothing?*
6. **Q.** *What about multi-level marketing?*

Prayer: *Today pray for honest assessment of the work we are doing. Is it fruitful and with integrity? Does it lead to good productivity? Pray also for those seeking work.*

February 7th Read Proverbs 21:10-20

The Wise work and save

Re-read **Proverbs 21:20**.

1. Again notice the A, B pattern. Part A, a wise person works, save and prepares for tomorrow. Part B, a fool just goes quickly through everything.
2. This may be where the old adage comes from, “*A fool and his money are quickly parted.*”
3. Like most proverbs we must be careful to never make them say more than they actually do! The proverbs commends us to be wise and work, labour hard and to accumulate that which will provide for needs (Part A) both today and tomorrow. This does not contradict what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:25-34 and verse 19. Our faith is not in ourselves but in the Lord. He gifts us and equips us to labour but ultimately we live by faith before the Lord. **Our net-worth is not our eternal security.**
4. Foolishness never thinks about tomorrow and lives by just squandering resources. It may make quick friends but it is living in a fantasy world. Christians should be very realistic and listen to God’s word for daily living. We are stewards of the Lord.

Prayer: *Today pray for Christians who struggle with worry.*

Also pray that Christians will set an example in society of honest work and planning not foolishness.

Finally pray for our heart to not worship or idolise our things or we may have worked hard and saved but become trapped by heart idolatry.

of Recreation, Rest and Pleasure

Today we focus upon **Proverbs 21:17**, a curious proverb about finding balance in life. The wise seek balance in their life.

1. Too much pleasure seeking or recreation can lead to poverty. It can create problems of allowing money too quickly to pass through one's fingers. **Q.** *Ask how many hours a day, then a week, you or your household spend in pleasure versus how many hours in work? Is there balance in your life?* Jesus spoke about sometimes having to do **amputation!**

2. Part B of the proverb shows things usually associated with recreation and luxury: wine, perfume oils, soaps, and spa treatments. The proverb is not necessarily condemning all such things but it is giving a warning that things can very easily get out of balance in your life and you will become a fool and allow hard earned money to quickly pass through your fingers.

3. This proverb is a call to self-examination as an individual and as a household. **Q.** *Are there recreational things which are taking over our lives and leading us away from the essentials of life whether work or the Lord and His people? This is about biblical balancing and prioritising our lives as individuals and families.*

Prayer: *Thank the Lord for work, for the blessings of this world.....name some blessings.....*

Next pray for forgiveness and grace after self-examination where change and repentance/amputation may be needed .

and Poverty

Here is another double proverb, **Proverb 14:23-24**. The theme here is about the wise making profits and the fool nothing which leads to their poverty. So today is about the two P's profit and poverty. This should not be foreign language for Christians to talk about such things!

1. The first proverb, verse 23A tells us that hard work does pay, it leads to profits. It does not promise that you will become a billionaire. That is a wrong conclusion. Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread, that is, for sufficiency.

2. Verse 23B repeats the idea of fools chasing fantasies and that they are really just talkers and never really get down to anything. Teach your children to be aware of such talkers and not to associate with such on intimate terms.

3. Verse 24 must be carefully handled. Yes, being wise **and** wealthy can be a great blessing and give a good inheritance. Matthew Henry said, "Those that have wealth, and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God and doing good in the world." Henry

sees that there can also be fools who are wealthy but they do not use their wealth for good and become very hardened people.

4. Thus these verses remind us that wholesome labour can produce wealth BUT the wise will use this wealth that they gain through work wisely! Some gain wealth BUT use it foolishly.

Prayer: *Lord help us to see today that the wealth we make through hard labour must bring honour to You, must do good for our households and for others. Keep us from the sin that makes us think our wealth leads to our own honour and glory.*

February 10th Read Proverbs 10:1-9 The Wise know that they must take Responsibility

Yes God is sovereign and The Lord promises to care for His children yet the Bible also speaks of our responsibilities to work and provide. We must never hide behind a false view of the sovereignty of God to avoid proper work. **Proverbs 10: 4-5** is another double proverbial set which reminds us to be wise and take responsibility for ourselves and work.

1. Chris Cagle wrote, " In light of his promises, we can be free from worry since we know God will take care of us. And given the wise instruction we've received, we need to resist passivity and inaction, which presume on God's kindness."
2. The Thessalonians had a wrong understanding of the second coming of Jesus and this led to work problems. Let us not ever have a wrong understanding of God's promises such that we become inactive and passive regarding work.
3. Proverbs 10:4-5 have the A, B pattern in each verse. In verse 4 there is the contrast between foolish hands and wise hands, one set does not work and the others work. Verse five talks about the summer season and the wise harvesting but the fool sleeps during the summer harvest season. Again the Lord speaks to us in pictures!
4. **Q.** *What have you learned this week about WORK from the book of Proverbs?*
5. **Take time to review this week's theme from Proverbs.**
6. *Conclude by reading 1 Corinthians 4:2 "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."(NIV) [the ESV uses the word stewards]*

Prayer: Paraphrase the Lord's Prayer today in prayer. Some may choose to recite it, but it can be a growing experience to take each petition and paraphrase it also. [Matthew 6:9-13]

February 11th Read Proverbs 11: 21-31 The Wise know that it is blessed to Give

Today is the Lord's Day once again. There has been a rhythm in our lives of work and now rest, worship, and fellowship. No doubt you will be going to worship and you will give an offering. Make sure that you talk about giving an offering with your children if there some at

your home. Discuss this idea that the wise know that it is a blessing to give from **Proverbs 11:24** with these quotations that I have taken from Timothy Keller.

1. “The more you scatter your wealth, the more you gather it, and the more you try to keep it for yourself, the more it dissipates.” (TK). Think of sowing seeds-- few seeds poor yield, more seeds, higher yield.
2. “This is *not* a promise that the more you give away, the more money you will make. Rather the more you give away wisely to ministries and programs that help people spiritually and physically, the more your money becomes the real wealth of changed lives in others and of spiritual health in yourself.” (TK)
3. “Radical generosity is an act of love toward God and toward others...[love of God and love of neighbour] WE love God with our money when we treat it as his, not ours, and send it out to the things he loves...” (TK)
4. Read together: **Acts 20:35**. The other beatitude of Jesus or proverb.

Prayer: *Rehearse in thanksgiving today all that others have given to you physically, spiritually, and emotionally.*

Conclude by praying with thanksgiving for all that the Lord has given in Christ Jesus.