

Pondering Proverbs #2

Proverbs 20-21

MEMORY VERSE

PROVERBS 21:2

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Newspaper and masking tape, or a 6” to 8” Nerf ball.

8 1/2” x 11” card stock, the “Self-exam” template included with your curriculum, scissors and markers.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Keep Focused

You will need newspaper and masking tape or a 6” to 8” Nerf ball. Before class roll up newspaper into a 6” to 8” ball and wrap it with masking tape. Have the class form a large circle in the center of the room. The center will need to be clear except for the ball. Place the ball in the center of the circle. Pick a child to begin. Have the child close their eyes and turn them around about 15 times. Then tell them to open their eyes and find the ball and kick it. Watch out, they may be a little dizzy and have a difficult time. Allow the other children to take turns one at a time. Have the other children help and look after the children who are dizzy.

Character is important! The dictionary defines character as “the set of qualities that make somebody distinctive, especially somebody’s qualities of mind and feeling.” As Christians, we desire our character to be “godly”--to reflect our Lord and God. For us to have godly character, we must remain focused on the Lord. Sometimes the world has so many distractions that it can make

our head spin and take and our focus off of the Lord. Let us stay focused on the Lord and His Word that we may develop the godly character He desires and live life as He intended it to be lived!

LESSON TIME!

Character is important to God. The Lord did not leave us guessing as to what godly character is. We can go to the Word of God to receive understanding and instruction on how He desires us to live our lives. Much good, practical instruction lays in the proverbs God gave to Solomon. Let's dig deep into God's Word, today, to find nuggets of wisdom that may reveal where we are falling short and help us build a character pleasing to God.

PROVERBS 20

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life.

It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.

The lazy man will not plow because of winter; he will beg during harvest and have nothing.

Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?

The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.

A king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters all evil with his eyes.

Who can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin”?

Diverse weights and diverse measures, they are both alike, an abomination to the LORD.

Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right.

The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.

Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.

“It is good for nothing,” cries the buyer; but when he has gone his way, then he boasts.

There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

Take the garment of one who is surety for a stranger, and hold it as a pledge when it is for a seductress.

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

Plans are established by counsel; by wise counsel wage war.

He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips

Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed at the end.

Do not say, "I will recompense evil"; wait for the LORD, and He will save you.

Diverse weights are an abomination to the LORD, and dishonest scales are not good.

A man's steps are of the LORD; how then can a man understand his own way?

It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows.

A wise king sifts out the wicked, and brings the threshing wheel over them.

The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart.

Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by lovingkindness he upholds his throne.

The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head.

Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.

Dispersed among the nuggets of wisdom in Proverbs Chapter 20 and 21, Solomon addresses the conduct and character of a king and the conduct and character of a child. **Character is important to God.**

Verses 2, 8, 26, 28, and 21:1 are about the conduct and character of kings. It is important for kings, or government leaders as we know them, today, to have character. To be a good leader, they must be a godly leader. Repeated over and over in scripture, we see that evil leaders bring problems to the people they rule over, but righteous leaders are a blessing. Those who are in authority have a lot of power. It is important that they use their power for the good of the people and not for themselves. God certainly gives instructions for leaders if they will heed His Word.

If our rulers who are placed over us are not ruling with wisdom and in submission to God, their power can be like the roar of a lion; it can make us tremble and be afraid. Perhaps, you have studied about some evil rulers in History who treated their people with cruelty--imprisoning and killing them unjustly. If a ruler has only his selfish interests at heart, the people will suffer greatly.

In contrast, a good ruler will scatter evil with his eye (verse 8). His judgments will be fair and compassionate. As a result, his officials under him have respect and are restrained from doing wrong themselves.

In verse 26, we see that a ruler, on occasion, has to be severe in his dealings. To uphold justice and avoid destruction to others, a king must deal with those who are practicing evil and violence toward others.

A good ruler embraces mercy and truth (verse 28). He pursues justice and compassion in his dealings with others. If a ruler is faithful to his word, sincere, and compassionate, the people will be secure in his rule--he will gain the affection of his people (Proverbs 29:4,14; 29:2; 28:15). **Character is important to God.**

Today, we do not have a king like Solomon, but we certainly have leaders. We have presidents, governors, congressmen, and senators and all kinds of other leaders that we need to obey and respect. We need to be praying for our rulers every day. We need to pray that they will give their heart to the Lord, willingly desiring the Lord to direct them while they rule over us.

Proverbs 20 also includes several verses about the conduct and character of children. Verse 11 gives us the idea that a child will “discover himself.” Children do not conceal their bent, or disposition the way adults have learned to do. It is obvious when a child is disobedient, since they often do not even try to hide it. Parents, who have the responsibility from God to mold and shape their children’s characters, are wise to observe their children during this time so they will know how to instruct and guide them through their childhood. **Character is important to God.**

Verse 20 warns children not to allow disdain of their parents. Rebellion in the heart of a child can grow. A child can start out by not liking his parents and not obeying their instructions. It can end with raging at their correction and rebukes and, ultimately, cursing his parents. God instructed children to obey their parents so that all would be well with them (Ephesians 6:1). By choosing rebellion against their parents, children can bring upon themselves misery and destruction. God cannot bless disobedience. Choose, instead, to bring long life and blessings upon yourself by obeying the instruction of your parents. **Character is important to God.**

God is Always With Us!

Ask the children to form pairs and stand back to back. Next, ask them to link their arms together. Ask them to do various things around the classroom. Sit in a chair, crawl on the floor, or put marbles or pennies into a jar. Then ask the children what it was like to have someone with them all of the time. Did it change the way they did things? How does God's presence—with them and in them at all times—change what they do? How can that help them to grow in godly character?

God is everywhere. He lives in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus. He promises to help us to live our lives for Him, developing His character in us.

PROVERBS 21

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.

To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin.

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.

The violence of the wicked will destroy them, because they refuse to do justice.

The way of a guilty man is perverse; but as for the pure, his work is right.

Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.

When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise; but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.

The righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked, overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness.

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.

A gift in secret pacifies anger, and a bribe behind the back, strong wrath.

It is a joy for the just to do justice, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity.

A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead.

He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the unfaithful for the upright.

Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.

There is desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man squanders it.

He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness and honor.

A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the trusted stronghold.

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

A proud and haughty man—"Scoffer" is his name; he acts with arrogant pride.

The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.

He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with wicked intent!

A false witness shall perish, but the man who hears him will speak endlessly.

A wicked man hardens his face, but as for the upright, he establishes his way.

There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the LORD.

The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LORD.

Proverbs 21 holds a wealth of verses instructing us in the way of wisdom. Have you ever thought you were right about something only to find out that you were really wrong? Verse 2 reminds us that we tend to think we're right; but God looks at our heart. We cannot always trust our emotions or thoughts. How good it is to pray the Lord will search us and know our hearts and lead us in His everlasting way (Psalm 139:23). Our hearts can deceive us. We need His truth and wisdom in the inward/hidden part of our heart (Psalm 51:6).

Verse 3 is a good reminder that God desires mercy and justice more than an expensive gift. We sometimes think that if we give money for the offering or go to church on Sunday, God is pleased with us; God sees the whole picture of our life and actions—He would be more pleased if we were kind to our brothers and sisters. God wants obedience in our hearts more than our gifts. Let us pray we would love Jesus and love each other in the way God has asked. **Character is important to God.**

Proverbs 20:15 again deals with the power of our words. In Solomon's time, it would appear gold and rubies were everywhere. There was great wealth in the kingdom; but King Solomon realized that pockets full of money cannot be compared to lips that speak knowledge. Wisdom cannot be purchased.

Proverbs 20:19 reminds us to be careful of two kinds of people: talebearers and flatterers. These are the people who cause problems among their neighbors and family. A talebearer is a person who involves himself in gossip. Gossip is listening to or sharing a rumor or report about a person that you would not want him to hear if he were present. The Lord does not want us to be

that kind of a person. A person that gossips cannot be trusted. It is a challenge not to become involved in gossip, but the reward from God will be worth the effort it takes.

Proverbs 21:23 says you will stay out of trouble if you are careful with your tongue.

More practical guidelines for living are imparted as King Solomon reminds us that money you make by cheating people will not last, nor will the Lord bless it. Do not be rash or inconsiderate in your affairs. Do not be afraid of hard work. Do not lie. Always honor any contract you enter into. When you give your word to someone else, keep it! **Character is important to God.**

God desires that our lives be a clear reflection of Him. He has given us His Holy Spirit to enable us to do what we cannot do ourselves. He has shown us what a godly life is through His Word. Our Lord is thorough; He does not leave us with a lot of questions. He is clear about His desires for us to show kindness to others, love mercy, be honest and fair, be hard working, be careful to love and obey our parents, guard our words, and pursue His wisdom. He clearly warns us of the consequences of pride, poor behavior, and refusal to listen to godly counsel. Continue to “ponder” the proverbs. Our lives will be blessed if we choose to walk in the fear—the deep respect—of God. **Character is important to God.**

Take a “Self-Exam”

Just like a doctor writes the results of his exam on a chart, make this “self-exam” chart to help you examine your own heart. You will need 8 1/2” x 11” card stock, the “self-exam” template, scissors and markers. Copy the template onto cardstock, one for each child. Cut out the markers at the bottom indicating, “OK” and “Not OK.” Cut small slits in the indicated lines. At the end of each day, pray and ask the Lord to search your heart. Are there areas that

need improvement? Indicate those areas on your chart and ask the Lord to help you improve in those areas. Color and decorate with markers.

Our memory verse, today, was Proverbs 21:2: “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.” We may think we are thinking or doing what is right, but find our hearts are wrong. The Lord searches and knows our hearts. He knows our motivations and our evil inclinations. We can fool ourselves and others, but not God. When we are sick, we go to the doctor to have an exam. We want to find out what is wrong so we can do what is necessary to get better. Let us go to God and His Word to examine our hearts—to test our motives and thoughts.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to discover what godly character is and live a godly life by the power of the Holy Spirit. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

"SELF" EXAMINATION CHART

Name of Examining Doctor _____ (along with the Lord)

Loving Others		
Obedience		
Honesty		
Kindness		
Self-Control		

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts." PROVERBS 21:2

	OK			NOT OK	
	OK			NOT OK	
	OK			NOT OK	
	OK			NOT OK	
	OK			NOT OK	