

MONDAY MANNA

3 February 2020

THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF PROVERBS

By Rick Boxx

While attending a funeral, I struck up a conversation with Joe, a guy I had not seen in 20 years. As he learned about what I do with Unconventional Business Network, the non-profit organisation I direct, Joe said that in one sense it reminded him of his uncle.

He explained that his uncle started with modest means in a blue-collar trade, but years later was worth millions of dollars. When Joe asked his uncle about his success, the uncle replied, "Years ago, I was looking for a solution to a work problem when I turned to the book of Proverbs. It worked so well that I've read and applied a chapter of Proverbs to my life every day since."

My experience with Proverbs has been similar. In fact, one of the Bible's "wisdom books," it says that about itself. But it is not just about the words we read; it is about the God who is behind those words. For instance, Proverbs 1:7 declares, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* Those might sound like harsh words, but as we continue reading through each of the book's 31 chapters, we come to understand why.

Proverbs is not a book of philosophy, nor lofty idealism, but one of down-to-earth, rubber-meets-the-road, practical principles and precepts. Proverbs 7:2 tells us: *"Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye."* The teachings we find in Proverbs prove equally relevant and useful for the workplace as they are for every other area of life.

I have heard of business executives who commit to meeting weekly to discuss the wisdom and insights from Proverbs, some of whom may not even claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Even as outsiders to God's family of faith, they see the value of the truths they find in this concisely written Old Testament book. Here is a small sampling of what we can learn from it. For consistent wisdom in your work, turn to Proverbs frequently:

Anger. *"A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult"* (Proverbs 12:16). *"A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly"* (Proverbs 15:18).

Consequences for actions. *"Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free"* (Proverbs 11:21). *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Discipline and correction. *"He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray"* (Proverbs 10:17). *"He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honoured"* (Proverbs 13:18).

Seeking wise counsel. *"For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make victory sure"* (Proverbs 11:14). *"A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength; for waging war you need guidance and for victory many advisers"* (Proverbs 24:5-6).

Handling finances. *"Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow"* (Proverbs 13:11). *"The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender"* (Proverbs 22:7).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Have you – or someone you know – ever taken the time to read through the book of Proverbs? If so, what kind of impact has it had?

How would you define "wisdom"? How would you distinguish it from knowledge, or experience?

Which of the passages from Proverbs cited in this "Monday Manna" seems most interesting or insightful to you? Explain your answer.

Since there are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, what would you think of committing to try reading one chapter of Proverbs a day for an entire month, and then evaluating what you had learned over that time?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 14:4, 15:33, 16:32, 18:16, 19:9, 20:25, 24:27, 27:4, 27:8, 27:17