

PROVERBS 19 Selected Verses:

Better the poor walking in integrity
than one perverse of speech who is a fool.

⁴ Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.

⁶ Many seek the favour of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver of gifts.

¹⁷ Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full.

⁸ To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper.

¹¹ Those with good sense are slow to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook an offence.

¹⁹ A violent-tempered person will pay the penalty;
if you effect a rescue, you will only have to do it again.

² Desire without knowledge is not good,
and one who moves too hurriedly misses the way.

1) 1,4,6,17 – While the world pays attention, gives respect and honours those who have money, the poor are neglected and dismissed as a burden and a problem, and they are even blamed all too often for making bad choices leading them into poverty. And yet, many of the proverbs in this collection contradict the values of the world when it comes to wealth and poverty. Verse 1 not only privileges the value of integrity above material wealth, but it also suggests that being wealthy can make one arrogant and disreputable in every way in terms of behaviour and speech. Moreover, as verses 4 and 6 teach, money draws people who claim to be friends, but how dear is a friend when money is not at play but rather need? Finally, verse 17 is radical when it links practical kindness to the poor with giving to God. These proverbs challenge us all in terms of our attitudes and behaviour when it comes to engaging the serious problem of poverty in our materially wealthy society. Compassion and generosity brings a different understanding and perspective leading to genuine wisdom.

2) 8 – Continuing with a similar theme, this proverb is very clear in how it privileges true wealth as wisdom and understanding rather than the material kind. It is the fool who puts all their soul into money as the measure of true prosperity.

3) 11,19 – These proverbs address the problem of anger and how it leads to trouble. An angry person sees threat everywhere and take offence easily because he mistrusts every intention and motive. Even when he finds a way to get out of a conflict because he is rescued or given another chance, unless the root problem of anger is addressed at its source it will keep rising up and causing trouble again and again. Sadly we live in a time in North America where there is a lot of anger and grievance leading to mistrust and hardness of heart. None of that can lead to positive outcomes. How do you and I sow counter seeds of love in this context of anger, disdain, blame and mistrust?

4) 2 – We all have desires. But we also have the guard rails of principle, laws and even self-judgement or the judgement of others against acting on many a desire. How do we discern whether our desire is God-given or rooted in more destructive currents that may live in us and need to be expunged or managed at the very least? We need knowledge, understanding and compassion upon ourselves. We need people around us whom we can trust and who care that we flourish in living out and cultivating healthy passion in our lives. And we also need the courage to resist what may be a harmful desire with lots of love and support. How do you manage deep desire within you? How do you channel your desire so that it has healthy and life-giving outlets?

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for creating us with passion in our hearts. Help us discern where and how and with whom we may share our desires and express them. Help us find our peace and our joy in simple things, to savour the moments, to be in the present discovering how you are there too with us and within us seeking to energize, flow and calm. Help us with our anger and resentment, and grant us wisdom in how to deal with the anger in others. Grow in us kindness and generosity toward those less fortunate and those who have made unfortunate choices for whatever reason. They are equally your children as we are your children. May we privilege the prosperity that comes from a wise heart above anything material that may distract us and entice our energy and desire. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.