

## PROVERBS 27: Selected Verses

<sup>1</sup>Do not boast about tomorrow,  
for you do not know what a day may bring.  
<sup>2</sup>Let another praise you and not your own mouth,  
a stranger and not your own lips.

<sup>4</sup>Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,  
but who is able to stand before jealousy?

<sup>5</sup>Better is open rebuke  
than hidden love.  
<sup>6</sup>Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts,  
but profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

<sup>17</sup>Iron sharpens iron,  
and one person sharpens the wits of another.

<sup>21</sup>The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,  
so a person is tested by being praised.

1,2 - Boasting, bragging, praising yourself. Have you ever done that? Confidence is important. Feeling good about yourself is good. But when does it also lack wisdom? And how does humility grow from an even greater confidence and assurance in yourself so that you don't need to brag, boast or praise yourself before others? To boast about tomorrow is to be blind to the reality that anything can happen that is not predictable or even desirable. Tomorrow is not in our hands in many ways. We need humility and we need consideration for those around us. How does our bragging and boasting make others feel?

And it's one thing for others to praise us. If they do so sincerely or out of gratitude, that is a beautiful gift they offer us. But to do it ourselves undermines any possibility of the gift it may be to receive it. It also blinds us to what others may or may not think. They may praise us because they genuinely feel it, or they may just be flattering us. If praise is not our focus, we receive it with thanks without being tainted by what is or is not genuine. What do you think?

4 - Anger is something we all know, whether it is in ourselves or as we experience it in or from another toward us. It is not pleasant for sure and it can also be scary to witness it or be the focus of it. But anger and wrath are emotions we often see on the surface like a volcano erupting. Jealousy, however, is something more often hidden, unless certain words or actions expose it. Jealousy is also something that isn't resolved the same way anger can be once expressed and the consequences faced. Jealousy lives on in a person and can eat away at their

soul and their relationships too. How much has jealousy lived in you or someone close to you? How has that affected your life and relationships?

Is it what others have that we are jealous of? Is it what they have accomplished? Is it how they are praised, honoured or regarded we are jealous of? Is it their appearance or health or some other feature they were born with that we feel we lack? Do we feel there is an unfairness we bear that others do not? We need to pray deeply for healing and relief from the demon of jealousy so that we can live the best life we can have whatever our circumstances.

5-6 - No one likes to be criticized or "rebuked" whether it is justified or not. But having someone we can trust to be truthful with us because they care, they respect us and are committed to us, is a treasure beyond anything else. Sadly, too often what we take for love is someone not willing to invest in being truthful with us because they care and then working things out with us. They're more than ready to flatter us with the "kisses" of their words, gestures or gifts. But they are not willing to be honest. Why? Because they want something from us rather than care to see us flourish and grow. What do you think?

17 - This is a well-known proverb that has become a common saying in some variation in the English language. "Iron sharpens iron as one person sharpens another" is the version I've heard most often. In the context of verses we've already considered, the meaning is filled in even more fully. Yes, one person can sharpen another by challenging them, being truthful with them and "rebuking" them when they need some criticism. But once again, we need to trust the source and the value of what is said. Sometimes, that takes time to discern. And sometimes, despite the painful way the criticism is delivered, there is always something we can learn and some way we can grow. May we be sharpened always by others whether they seek our good or not. Because being sharpened is for our own good.

21 - This proverb follows the wisdom of others before. What is the test thought of here when we are praised? It's all about what praise does for us. Does it swell our egos? Does it make us feel we are better than others or have something over them? Does it simply grow our narcissism (our self-focus)? Or do we take praise with gratitude but also continue to be mindful of who we are, how we got here, all those who have been part of getting us to where we are, and all we have yet to learn? We need to learn how to take praise better. We need to learn how to receive it with thanks and feel good about it, not suspicious of the source. And yet, we need to grow in our humility and thought to how others are made to feel in the room, so to speak. Do we praise others as much as we seek out praise for ourselves? Do we actually mean what we say? Do we feel grounded in ourselves and our belovedness before God no matter what we do or fail to do? And do we learn and grow not because we want to be accepted, but because we have been loved and accepted and therefore want to give back in some way? Such important questions for us to ponder.

PRAYER: Thank you, O God. For people who praise us and mean it sincerely, we thank you. For ways we learn how to keep grounded, feeling good about ourselves, but also mindful of others, we thank you. For ways we see the good in others and praise them for it, we thank you. Help us when feelings of jealousy or anger swirl within us. Help us discern constructive ways to address our concerns without disrespect or reactivity, but with thoughtful and honest communication. Help us when others offer criticism, especially when we don't trust the source. Help us grow and learn through criticism rather than simply react negatively to it. And thank you, that you love us as we are even before we become. Open us up to receive your love and to believe deep in our hearts that we are infinitely beloved and precious. Amen.