



HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

TO: **LEGISLATORS**FROM: **PASTOR RALPH DROLLINGER 661-803-7970 24/7/365**DATE: **MAY 20, 2013**

I am always amazed when I study the Bible and obtain a new glimpse into the mind of God on a matter. That's been the case this past week in studying out what Proverbs has to say about priorities.

In the following outline I have attempted to organize all of Solomon's Proverbs on this subject, and it is quite fascinating! The Bible says that the greatest objectives in life should relate to our knowledge of God and our subsequent development of character; this implies that we continue to battle against our sin nature. Those urgencies then undergird our internal priority for serving other people over ourselves.

These concerns, passions that Solomon states should be the priorities of an up-and-coming political leader (his son Rehoboam, to whom he is writing, would be the next King), are quite different from what most secularists who hold office would think or imagine; herein are the priorities for how best to use your time – and He will bless you if you adhere to them.

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PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

In Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus he provides followers of Christ with a keen insight into our need to prioritize things while in this world. In 5:15 to 17 he states...

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Our commitment to prioritize things in our lives is not an option; this passage informs us that it is an important aspect of godly living. God commands us to be organized, deliberate and decisive in the way we use our **time**. In this passage the difference between **wisdom** and **foolishness** is distinguished, determined by one's use of **time**. As determined by how you use your **time** one of those labels best describes you.

A further aspect that determines wisdom over and above **foolishness** is to first understand what God's **will** is for your life. Without possessing a very confident personal understanding of **the will of the Lord**, it stands to reason that it is impossible to be a good steward of one's **time**. In a sense, this is easier for an elected official to figure out because God has placed you into the leadership of our nation. If that weren't God's will for your life, you wouldn't be here because you know how hard it is to win an election in your own power – you know that you are here only by His grace and **will**. It follows from this instructive passage that once you have figured out and are confident in what **God's will** is for your life, that the further aspect of living **wisely** is to **make the most of your time** while you intently pursue God's specific will for your life.

Here then is the biblical, foundational reason why prioritizing things is so critically important – and the book of Proverbs has much more to add to this discussion! What follows are God's insights about

how you can *be sure* you are **making the most of your time** while in office! This study should greatly aid and buoy you: knowing confidently that you are pleasing Him with the way you are going about fulfilling your calling. Read on....

II. FIVE INTERNAL PRIORITIES

A. GOD AND HIS WISDOM

Solomon personifies wisdom, frequently referring to it as "she" in the following passage:

3:13-14 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold.

If one characterizes God's **wisdom** as merchandise, then the priority of pursuing it far exceeds that of pursuing the merchandise of this world, i.e. material and/or popularity gains. We will see in the following Proverbs that having little material wealth with character is preferable over much material wealth without character. This is a key attitude for internally sustaining, cogent happiness and joy while on the Hill.

Some of the most fulfilled people I know are third world Christians who don't have to struggle as much with the temptation to lay up treasures on earth in lieu of treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20) because they lack material excess to begin with. But, you say, is it possible for me to have both? Yes, but rare is the person who will not hold to one and despise the other *over the course of time*. Notice that Solomon (who, when God offered him his choice, chose wisdom) often contrasts wisdom and material wealth:

16:16 How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.



PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

Importantly, what Solomon taught here earlier in his life to his son, turned out to be true at the end of both his and his son's lives. Often times *over time* wealth begins to possess the person, versus the other way around. This is why it is so important for resourceful individuals to wisely (wisdom: "the skill at living life for God's glory") develop increasingly strong giving patterns as they grow older, lest their wealth consume them.

Calculate for yourself the overwhelming interests of heaven above earth, of the soul above the body, of eternity above time, and who will dispute this verdict? Wisdom is inexpressibly better: It is more valuable, more abiding, more fruitful and more satisfying.¹

8:11 For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.

Millions chase riches and are disappointed, but who has pursued wisdom and not gained its virtue? Colossians 2:3 states of Christ, "in [Him] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." From the storehouse of the Savior, whom we need to know personally, flows a *guaranteed* return on investment, an investment that will enhance life for an eternity.

8:19 My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.

15:16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and turmoil with it.

Gaining the riches of God's wisdom via His Word must be your first priority in life. This is what Jesus states in the Sermon on the Mount, when He says,

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...

The Greek word for **first** *protos* means "Priority in terms of importance, versus sequence: foremost, prominent, most important." Contextually, this passage finds Jesus directing His listeners to repent and come to faith in Him – and thereby internalize His righteousness, i.e., when Jesus walked the earth He was "the kingdom of God at hand" (cf. Mt. 3:2). So He is saying in paraphrase, "Seek first (in terms of priority) your personal relationship with me!" Knowing God need be your ultimate priority.

B. PERSONAL HUMILITY

The second highest priority in life needs to be keeping things in perspective. What is more warped than all of us who are proud – but who have no reason to be proud? Nothing amuses the angels as much as a proud man. Negligent of God's enablement is man's pride, and it serves to vividly underscore the verb "fallen." Even more so, man is often proud of his pride! 1John 2:16 hits home, "...the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." Solomon says about this....

12:9 Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant than he who honors himself and lacks bread.

16:19 It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

**WHO IN OUR CAPITOL STRIVES TO RISE?
WHO DESIRES TO LIE LOW IN HUMILITY?
WHO PUTS CAUTION TO THEIR
AMBITION?**

25:27 It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glory to search out one's own glory.

25:7 For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.



PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

“Let each of us lay himself to the work of casting down our high tower of conceit.”² Better to be about this now than at Judgment before the King of kings, whom your eyes have not seen, and therein be humbled by Him (cf. Rev. 1:5-7; 18).

What follows is a solemn perspective that should motivate your pursuit of humility:

But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

Psalm 75:7 is a passage that should sober, inform, impact and guide every elected official: This is a mandatory memory verse for every legislator! Translated here, one should quit prioritizing striving for personal advancement (such a perspective tempts one to compromise in order to get ahead). Rather, as Psalm 46:10 states, “Cease striving and know that I am God.” Just the opposite of striving for vocational advancement should be one’s priority: an emphasis on knowing God better and subsequent personal sanctification. Allow Him to guide your career path and promote you! States the Psalmist just prior to 75:7, (I like it in the KJV).

For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

Promotion then, is not of this physical world as though it were dependent on you. Rather, it is something God does in your life. Therefore prioritize seeking Him and His character! Think about this a minute and be smart my friend: *Seek in humility to please the one who actually does the promoting!*

Over my many years of ministry to elected leaders, I have seen Members who profess Christ ignore their Sponsor once they arrive at the Capitol, and soon thereafter lose reelection. Why? They really didn’t seek to please the One who appointed them to office! Is there any question why God does not

continue to promote them? Be sure of this: **He puts down one and exalts another.** I warn you my friend, don’t let this be the case with you on the Hill! The continuing question you must ask yourself is this: Am I pleasing the one who promoted me – who appointed me – to DC? You must live in constant humility and respect of this principle.

C. PERSONAL INTEGRITY

The third priority for the believer should be a constant eye for maintaining personal integrity in heart and actions. The word “integrity,” chosen by most translation teams for the Greek word behind it in the NT (e.g. the book of Titus, 1:7; 2:7) comes from the Latin word *integer*, meaning “whole” (in contrast to a fraction) connoting “soundness.” The idea is the integration of beliefs with actions. The following four Proverbs speak about the priority of personal integrity. Note again the adversary of materialism in three of them. Why? Like self-promotion, the pursuit of great wealth often eclipses, due to its addictive nature, the need for concentrating on inner character development.

22:1 A good name is to be more desired than great wealth; favor is better than silver and gold.

A good name grows out of good character; whereas our reputation is the sum total of what others think about us. Coach Wooden used to say, “Work on your character, not your reputation.” Favor stems from personal character, and personal character stems from personal integrity. Too many “believers” in the Capitol have bad reputations for various reasons. Will you be one of them? Are you known for your pride? Your wealth? Your career? Your power? Or are you known for your integrity?

16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice.

28:6 Better is the poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is crooked though he be rich.



PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

19:1 *Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.*

Personal integrity must be a priority in your life. This is largely achieved by your personal discipline to be obedient to the smallest nudges of a well-trained conscience and to go the extra mile to make sure that your theology informs your motivation and your proper motivations inform your actions.

D. SELF CONTROL

Self Control is the fourth internal priority.

16:32 *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.*

This is a parallel contrasting Proverb relative to the length of a battle. It typically took no more than a day or so for the **mighty** to **capture** an ancient **city**. In contrast, one's battle with their fallen, fleshly nature, even with the Helper, the indwelling Holy Spirit, is a battle for a lifetime. Self-control requires unremitting perseverance. Daily training, decisive and conscious mastery over one's spirit can only be achieved by developing replacement passions: an inner zeal for Christ that causes "the things of this world [to grow] strangely dim."³ Again, this cannot be achieved via sheer discipline; one must fall in love with Christ to be victorious in their battles with the flesh. It follows that worshipping Him needs to be one of your internal priorities in daily living so as to be strengthened.

E. RECEIVING CORRECTION

The fifth priority of your life needs to be the ingesting legitimate correction.

27:5 *Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.*

How would you rate your friendships in light of the following? States Bridges:

I am a poor, straying sinner, with a wayward will and a blinded heart; going wrong at every step. The friend for my case is one who will watch over me with open rebuke; but a reprover, when needful; not a flatterer. The genuineness of friendship without this mark is more than doubtful; its usefulness utterly paralyzed."⁴

For someone who lives in a fishbowl, developing this level of depth in a relationship – a person or two who can honestly, confidently and privately speak into your life on occasion – can be a difficult and daunting assignment, especially after having been hurt in the past by people that you have allowed to be close, who then betrayed you. Nonetheless, private vulnerability to a few needs to be a necessary priority. May I encourage you to risk attempting this, perhaps again, only now with a bit more wisdom. Think of the alternative: to continue down a path toward total isolation. No one really wants that. So who are those people and what can you do this week to improve on a few relationships that contain personal accountability?

6:23 *For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline the way of life.*

These internal priorities will naturally lead to....

III. THREE EXTERNAL PRIORITIES

Prioritize first the internal honing of the person of Christ and His attributes in your heart. What follows are external relational priorities over and above personal pursuits – no matter how noble your personal/vocational objectives may be. Notice the following relational priorities from Proverbs....

A. PRIORITIZE YOUR MARRIAGE

21:9 & 25:24 *It is better to live in a corner of an attic than in a house shared with a contentious woman.*



PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

This Proverb occurs twice; perhaps for emphasis. It is a sad day indeed when that which God intended to be the “crown to her husband” becomes the “rottenness to his bones” (Prov. 12:4). Not considering the party at fault, too many marriages end this way, if not in legal divorce. Why? Little thought prior and during marriage is given to the duties to be done, the temptations to be avoided, and the crosses (loyalty and faithfulness in difficult times) to be borne. With no-fault divorce laws removing most legal impediments to the breaking of vows, the only recipe for persevering matrimony is the honorable, proven commitment of both spouses to Christ prior to engagement. With such a basis, contentions will be restrained by the preventative habits of Christian discipline, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the other five internal precedents previously mentioned. One must prioritize, protect and labor to attain and maintain a good marriage. Remember....

21:19 *It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman.*

So prevent this from happening! Too often the wife becomes contentious and vexing due to the irresponsibility of her selfish husband.

B. PRIORITIZE YOUR FAMILY

15:17 *Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fattened ox served with hatred.*

Again, note the contrast of love and loyalty in relationships versus the overpowering elixir of material possessions. The latter tends to squelch the former. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Love is depicted by the following characteristics, characteristics that, when consistently practiced and prioritized, foster long-lasting, in-depth family relationships.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it

does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails;

The ongoing relationships in a nuclear family bring out the level and maturity of love presently existing in each member more so than in casual, non-blood relationships. Again, loving familial relationships can be thwarted and squelched by wrong, non-people priorities....

17:1 *Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife.*

And again, loving relationships are also thwarted by a lack of internal integrity....

19:22 *What is desirable in a man is his kindness, and it is better to be a poor man than a liar.*

If the Hebrew word for **kindness** *hasdo* is better translated **loyalty**, then the inference of being a **liar** in this Proverb has an eye toward disloyalty. This leads to the conclusion that **loyalty** has a very high value in family relationships: it is better to live in poverty than to be disloyal to a family member.

**GENUINE LOVE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS WILL
COST YOU SOMETHING.
THINK OF LOYALTY AS THAT COST.
THE RESULTS ARE WORTH THE PRICE.**

In order to be **loyal** to someone it might cost you a bit of discomfort, given the idiosyncrasies of most everyone. But it's worth it in the long run because you'll have a close family and extended family! It is interesting to note too on this point, that **loyalty** is a legal aspect in American law. To be disloyal to the State is to be charged with treason. To be disloyal



PROVERBS ON PRIORITIES

to your employer can also involve tort or even criminal liability. We all know that one cannot steal communications, databases, or ideas and give them to other countries or business competitors. That is to say **loyalty** is a big part of the American fabric and is a necessary component of building not only a nation and its industry, but family relationships as well. Disloyalty destroys; be patient with quirks.

C. PRIORITIZE YOUR FRIENDS

27:10 Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend, and [then] do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity; better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.

Solomon exhibits this quality in the cultivation of his father's friend Hiram (1Kings 5:1-10). Unfortunately, Rehoboam, Solomon's son, did not do the same. He rejected his father's wise friends, listening to his boyhood buddies instead, and it cost him the kingdom (1Kings 12:6-19). Old, tried, loyal and wise friends are better than new ones. Hold on to them, work through difficulties; try not to lose them; go the extra mile; cherish them in your life.

18:24 A man of too many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

May you cultivate, and may God grant you friends that stick close to you throughout your life.

IV. ONE COUNTER-PRIORITY

What are the passions of your heart? What's above Christ's character in your life? What's superseded wife, family and friends? Again, there's one major wrong priority repeated throughout Proverbs that often creeps in, and especially here in America: Materialism. It so easily becomes the replacement god of all of the virtuous aforementioned.

23:4-5 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When

you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.

When one makes the pursuit of wealth their all-encompassing objective, it blinds the cultivation of the others mentioned. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus says,

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

When you look at a dime in your hand it is small, but when you move it closer and closer to your eye it becomes larger and larger – until it is all that you can see. Therein is the god of this age that so many worship – and diminishes these passions and priorities as expressed here in Proverbs.

V. CONCLUSION

How do make the most of your time? If Solomon addressed both Houses this week on this subject, this is what he would have said to you. What are your priorities? Are they biblically based? Come to our *Members Bible Study* to get encouragement on this. It's difficult to grow in any of these areas apart from a steady diet of Bible teaching: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Romans 12:2 further states how one changes their priorities in life,

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

A steady diet of the Word of God is what will set and train your mind on, these right priorities.

¹ Bridges, Charles *Proverbs* (Banner of Truth, 1998) p 237

² Ibid., 466

³ This is the ministry emphasis of John Piper. I heartily commend all of his books to you.

⁴ Bridges, Charles *Proverbs* (Banner of Truth, 1998) p 504