

## **A Proverb a Day Shows You the Way!**

*Presented by Mary Lowman*

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### **Day One**

There is a book in the Bible that is just full of wisdom for our everyday lives, and that is the book of Proverbs. I'm going to share a proverb a day, which will show you the way! We'll look at five different proverbs and see the wisdom that is there for us. I encourage you to make Proverbs a daily reading habit. There are 31 chapters, so it's easy to read the chapter that corresponds to the day of the month. I've been doing that for several years and find the practical advice has been most beneficial in my life.

Today let's look at Proverbs 22:10. It says, *drive out the mocker and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.* Another translation reads, *drive out the scoffer and contention will go out. Even strife and dishonor will cease.*

Have you ever worked with a person who was a mocker and a scoffer? That's the person who makes fun of others, who ridicules people and organizations, who is arrogant and causes problems seemingly on purpose. When there's a mocker in the group, the work environment can be pretty miserable.

This proverb says by getting rid of a mocker, you get rid of strife. If you are in a management position, it's good to remember there are times when the best thing you can do is to let an employee go. Now, I hope that doesn't sound cruel, but a person who is intent on offending others—and some people are—can have very detrimental effects on an organization.

Of course, as Christians, we still must care about people regardless of how unlovable they are. And though we can never change people, the Holy Spirit can, so we shouldn't give up praying for them. But that doesn't mean we allow them to ruin the working environment for everyone else. Remember, the workplace is not a rehab center or a counseling office. We want to help people, when possible, but you don't hire people to reform or change them; you hire them to do a job.

Solomon said, in his wisdom, you're better off to drive out the mocker and the scoffer, for by so doing, the strife and dishonor will stop, people will be able to work productively together, and everyone will benefit, including the person who is the troublemaker. Allowing him or her to continue to get by with inappropriate behavior doesn't help that individual.

### **Day Two**

I'm sharing a Proverb a Day, which will show you the way. Listen to this passage from Proverbs 6:

*Go to the ant, you sluggard: consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provision in summer and gathers its food at harvest (Proverbs 6:6-8).*

In the margin of my Bible by this verse I have written "self-motivated." The ant is a self-motivated creature. Without anyone standing over all those ants and telling them what to do, they perform their jobs diligently and are prepared for what lies ahead.

Self-motivation is a key factor in our business world today. Very few people have it. Too many people are just trying to get by with as little as possible. They don't look beyond their noses to see what else could be done, they take no initiative, are not willing to go any extra miles.

A Christian in the workplace should be like the ant: self-motivated, willing to dig in and get the work done without prompting, without constant supervision. Does your manager trust you? Can she or he be assured you will diligently do your job whether anyone's watching or not? Certainly, a Christian should have that kind of reputation.

You know, your witness on your job will be effective if there is a difference in the way you work. If you have the "it's not my job" attitude that is prevalent today, if you drag your feet and do only what you're told to do, if you gripe and complain about doing anything above and beyond your job description, how will your coworkers and management know Christ makes a difference in your life? They won't, and your verbal witness, if there is one, will fall on deaf ears.

If you are a Christ-follower, you have a power far beyond yourself to motivate you. You have God's Holy Spirit dwelling within you to give you the strength you need to be self-motivated. And when you are motivated to do what's right, you will have an outstanding testimony because you do your work right whether anyone's watching or not, you do it to the best of your ability, and you're willing to go the extra mile.

Go to the ant and consider its ways. We can learn wisdom and self-motivation from those tiny ants.

### Day Three

Proverbs is a very practical book, one which we can easily apply to our everyday lives in the working world. I'm examining a Proverb a day, which will show you the way!

*Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning*  
(Proverbs 9:9).

One of the most important characteristics every Christian should have, in my opinion, is teachableness. A person who is teachable is a very wise person, and a truly humble person, who recognizes they don't know it all and there's always something new to learn.

As a manager, I can tell you it is a joy to have an employee who has a teachable spirit, who is willing to learn and looking for ways to improve. A manager will endure mistakes and learning cycles and will hang in there with you much longer if he or she sees an attitude of teachableness—wanting to learn. Nothing is more frustrating than trying to work with a person who knows it all and has no desire to learn anything new.

How about you? Are you teachable? How do you respond when you're given helpful hints or suggestions? Do you resent it? Sometimes we can learn from younger people, people in business shorter times than us, people below us in rank. But if you've got your back up or you feel threatened when someone tries to teach you something, you're likely to stagnate right where you are.

It is very smart and very mature to accept teaching, to listen to new ideas and suggestions. Managers need this quality as much—perhaps more—than anyone else. Many times, we managers fail to listen to our employees, who have very good ideas that could help us if we were more teachable.

The day you get beyond being teachable, you're in trouble, because that's the day you'll stop growing. And you don't just stand still; you go backwards.

## Day Four

I'm examining a Proverb a day to show us the way, because the book of Proverbs is wonderfully applicable to the situations we face in our everyday lives.

Proverbs 6:2-5 gives us some very practical advice.

*You have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbor's hands: Go—to the point of exhaustion—and give your neighbor no rest! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler (Proverbs 6:2-5).*

How many times have you wanted to crawl under a table because you said something you wished you hadn't? Perhaps they were words spoken in anger or haste, or words of gossip, or judgmental words. Unkind, untruthful, harsh, unnecessary words that inflicted harm of some kind.

What do you do? You can't unsay them; you can't delete them; you can't erase them. Those words hang there in your memory and the memory of others. What can you do?

Solomon says to go and humble yourself to the person your words harmed; go, confess to them, and do it immediately. Apologize and do all you can to free yourself from the damage of those words.

Now, I know that's not easy to do. But it's a lot easier than not doing it! Once in a hotel on a business trip, I accused a hotel employee of neglecting to follow my instructions. I was certain I had given those instructions. So, nicely, but directly, I said, "I'm sure it's your fault; please correct it."

Well, a few minutes later I came to realize I was the one who was wrong, not him. It was embarrassing; I wanted to run away. But I forced myself to go to the phone, call the young man and apologize to him. Even a simple apology like that wasn't easy, but once I did it, I felt so free. And I could tell it made a big difference to him. He kept saying, "That's so nice of you to call. Thank you." Well, it wasn't nice of me; it was the right thing to do.

If you've offended someone with words, don't procrastinate. Go right now, today and apologize. That's good advice from Proverbs.

## Day Five

Proverbs 18:17 says, *in a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines*. This proverb is very good advice for us.

What it teaches us is to withhold judgment and opinions until we've heard both sides to any story. We shouldn't be gullible, and we shouldn't jump to conclusions.

This is a particularly difficult area for me, for I am very impulsive and very much an overreactor. And every time I do that, I regret it. I am by God's grace focusing prayer and attention in my life on learning to wait until I hear both sides of any story, to make sure I've got my facts straight, to remember there may be something here I just don't know yet.

I remember coming into the office on a very busy day, to find a message that irritated me at once. With only partial information, I thought this other person was doing something way out of line, and I overreacted. I went to the phone and started calling her, to get things straightened out. Thankfully, she was not in, and I didn't get to speak with her at that time.

When she did return my call and explained the situation, I realized the message had not been complete, and if I had talked with her earlier, I would have overreacted and probably hurt her feelings. God protected me that time and reminded me how much I need to learn not to overreact.

Wise Solomon warned us the first person to present their case can sound very convincing, because we haven't heard the other side of the story. We need to listen to people, but not be too quick to agree or disagree with them until we've sorted out the facts and know what we're dealing with. This is good advice for managers and employees alike.

I want to encourage you to go to the Proverbs daily for guidance. There are 31 chapters, so you can read the one that corresponds to the day of the month. I've been doing that for several years, and many times God has used the Proverbs to give me clear guidance, especially on job-related issues.