

Devotion for July 29, 2020

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Proverbs 1:1-7, 20-33

¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

² For learning about wisdom and instruction,
for understanding words of insight,

³ for gaining instruction in wise dealing,
righteousness, justice, and equity;

⁴ to teach shrewdness to the simple,
knowledge and prudence to the young—

⁵ let the wise also hear and gain in learning,
and the discerning acquire skill,

⁶ to understand a proverb and a figure,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

²⁰ Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.

²¹ At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

²² ‘How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?

²³ Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.

²⁴ Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,

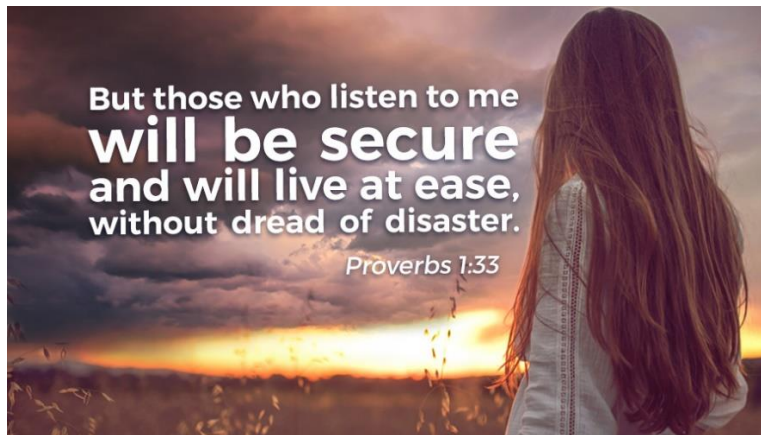
²⁵ and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,

²⁷ when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.

²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

²⁹ Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
³⁰ would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be sated with their own devices.
³² For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
³³ but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.'



Whenever there is a gap in a scripture passage, I always go looking for those missing verses first. *What did they say? Why were they omitted? Do they have anything to do with the verses we were given?* In this case, verses 8-19 address warnings against evil companions. It would be worth going back to read them, although they are not required for today's selection to make sense. On to the verses that we do have.

The book of Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature in the Bible. Traditionally, King Solomon is considered the author although many of these proverbs come from several centuries before his time. This is clearly not a book of the history of Israel. Instead it observes life and offers instruction. While it's hardly "Wisdom for Dummies," Proverbs might be considered a "How to live the best life possible" collection of sayings.

The first seven verses of today's reading set the stage for the rest of the book. This Prologue reveals that this is a book about wisdom and instruction. But not every proverb makes sense. I remember when a high school Sunday School class decided to study Proverbs. They quickly discovered that some sayings could be applied to their lives, but other statements seemed to be nonsense. They determined that part of wisdom was recognizing what was helpful, and acknowledging that some statements weren't helpful.

What I like best about Proverbs is that Wisdom is portrayed as a woman, crying in the streets, calling to all to listen to her words. We can hear the pleading in her voice as she urges them to listen to her. We can hear the disdain in her voice for those who would ignore her. There is no in-between for Wisdom. No place for lukewarm sentiments.

Here's a thought: There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. If you find a month with 31 days (like August) you could work your way through the book of Proverbs one chapter a day. You can explore this book that is often considered an expression of God. You can consider, like that high school class did what it is that makes sense for your life. You can gain insight into the desires that God has for us.

Grant, O God, that these words of Wisdom enrich our lives and draw us closer to you.

May we hear and gain in learning.

Let us give heed to her reproof, and live at ease, without dread of disaster.

In the name of the one who is most wise, Jesus Christ, Amen