

A Proverbs Driven Life (Timeless Wisdom for Your Words, Work, Wealth, and Relationships) by Anthony Selvaggio, Shepherd Press, (Wapwallopen, PA, 2008). (65 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Christ's Parables Were Wisdom.

As the Gospels go on to richly demonstrate, the entirety of Jesus' adult life was marked by his display and use of wisdom. This is perhaps most powerfully seen in his famous parables, which, like the biblical Proverbs, are a particularly concentrated form of wisdom instruction. Jesus was a man who lived wisdom. [page 21]

2. God Is the Perfection of All Wisdom.

The words of Proverbs bear wisdom from God. This wisdom is inherent in who God is, for just as God is the perfection of all holiness and all power, he is also the perfection of all wisdom. God is the only source of true wisdom. [page 21]

3. Christ Gives Us Wisdom.

Because of Jesus' work on our behalf, wisdom is a gift available for the asking, as James declares: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:15). Jesus is the giver of wisdom and one of the ways Jesus gives his people wisdom is by providing us with the book of Proverbs. [page 23]

4. Christ Is Present in Proverbs.

It is this reality, recognizing that Proverbs is a book about Jesus, that serves as the impetus for living a Proverbs-driven life. As we live wisely according to Proverbs, we are living like Christ. We are being conformed to his image and we are reflecting his glory to the world around us. We can live a Proverbs-driven life because Jesus first lived that life for us. As the one who *lived* wisdom, the one who *is* wisdom, the one who is the *way* of wisdom, and the one who *supplies* wisdom, Jesus is present in Proverbs in a most profound way. [page 23]

5. Live God's Word Every Day.

Proverbs offers you the privilege of living God's Word in every aspect of daily life. [page 23]

6. Proverbs Provides Us Wisdom for Everything.

Proverbs provides us with wisdom regarding finances, childrearing, marriage, employment, friendship, and speech.

If your speech is godly, and your economic life is biblically balanced and in its place, and your human relationships are sound and healthy according to Scripture, you've just about got everything covered. [pages 23-24]

7. God Gives Us Godly Thinking But Does Not Think for Us.

Biblical scholar Graeme Goldsworthy describes the challenge of Proverbs:

The individual proverbs are not detailed expressions of the law of Sinai handed down from God, but human reflections on individual experiences in the light of God's truth. Thus, they show us that being human as God intends means learning to think and act in a godly way. It means that, in revelation, God gives the framework for godly thinking but he will not do our thinking for us. We are responsible for the decisions we make as we seek to be wise (to think in a godly way) and to avoid being foolish (to think in a godless way). [page 24]

8. Lots of Wisdom in Few Words.

Proverbs 25:11 packs a great deal of wisdom in a small space: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."

- Such words are like *gold*: They are inherently in the universe of valuable and attractive.
- Indeed, they are like *apples* of gold: Their value in attractiveness has been enhanced through skillful craftsmanship that has molded them into a pleasing form.
- These words are in a *setting*: They are presented in a way that is perfectly fitted to circumstances.
- The setting is *silver*: Although attractive in itself, its very attractiveness enhances its primary purpose--to display the unique beauty of that which it holds. [page 28]

9. Wisdom Is the Character of God.

Words that are truly wise are informed not just by the facts of the situation, but by knowledge of God--his character, purpose, will, and ways. They attain to a higher standard than that of worldly reasoning. [page 30]

10. Being Silent Is the Best Wisdom.

The book of Proverbs has a strong bias in favor of silence, or at least the very spare use of words by the wise. Consider, for example, Proverbs 17:27-28, "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue." [page 32]

11. A Word of Correction.

A word of correction is more likely to be received if their recipient is spiritually mature. [page 33]

12. Spiritual Maturity.

A word of correction is more likely to be received if the giver is seen as spiritually mature. [page 33]

13. Relationships of Trust.

A word of correction is more likely to be received if the giver and receiver have an established relationship of trust. [page 33]

14. Ask Permission for Correction.

A word of correction is more likely to be received if the giver has sought permission to present it. [page 34]

15. Ask for Correction.

A word of correction is more likely to be received if it has been asked for. [page 34]

16. Speaking Only Truth.

Compared to the eternal nature of truth, lies last only a moment. A wise person therefore seeks to speak only that which is true. [page 34]

17. Gossip Is Given to Inappropriate People at Inappropriate Times.

Most importantly, gossip is often based on lies, and is frequently motivated by a desire to harm another person. As Tremper Longman notes:

Rumors are negative reports about other people based on uncertain evidence. They are spread to injure people, not to help them. Gossip may ultimately turn out to be true, but that does not exonerate those who speak it to others. If true, then the report is being given to inappropriate people at an inappropriate time. [page 35]

18. Our Work Displays God's Glory.

God calls us to a particular role, for a season or for a lifetime. That calling requires us to work. Along with God's call comes to grace to perform that work well, the ultimate purpose being to display his glory. [page 45]

19. Work Is a True Calling from God.

The work ethic established in Genesis is also a major emphasis in the Book of Proverbs. A Proverbs-driven life is one that works hard for the glory of God. Embodying a biblical

work ethic, and seeing work as truly a calling from God, is a core part of our purpose. [page 47]

20. Our Work Should Be Consecrated to God.

The Bible will not allow for dual-mindedness. Instead it beckons us, as Christians, to view our whole lives, including our work consecrated to God. The apostle Paul instructs us in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." Here Paul issues a clear, universal, unqualified statement. We are to view everything we do, even seemingly mundane things like eating and drinking, as opportunities to glorify God. There's simply no question that work is included in the phrase "whatever you do." Therefore, work is a way in which we can and should glorify God. [page 49]

21. Echo Our Creator Who Works.

Refusal to embrace a diligent work ethic is sinful because it violates a primary call God has given us as Christians—to echo our Creator who works. The sin of the sluggard (like all sin) has consequences—poverty and want. [page 53]

22. Not Being Obsessed with Productivity.

An honorable, and God-glorifying approach to work does not involve a continual obsession with productivity. We are called not only to be workers, but also to be children, spouses, parents, church members, citizens, and stewards of God's material gifts. God's call to us is to have the right heart attitude toward each role, resulting in right priorities. [page 57]

23. A Balanced Life Includes Work, Rest, and Proper Attention to Responsibilities.

In the final analysis, we can stop working and rest because God is sovereign. He is in control, not us. If we are pursuing his priorities—which include rest as well as a broad range of responsibilities—our efforts will ultimately be futile, no matter how hard we work. But as we embrace a balanced life that includes work, rest, and proper attention to all our responsibilities, he will provide all we need to accomplish his will.

It's extremely liberating to recognize that God gives us enough time to finish everything to which he has actually called us. Here are some of those things: devotional time with God; relationships in service in your family, church, and community; and matters of stewardship over your material goods. [page 60]

24. Work Is a Gift of God in a Calling.

As Christians, work is not merely a task or job, but a gift from God in a calling! When we work we have the opportunity to imitate our Father, the master worker. When we

work we have the opportunity to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ, who still at work for us. No wonder that when our work is well-performed to the God's glory it should bring us pleasure! [page 63]

25. All Matters of Life Belong to God.

As Christians we must not be dual-minded, pretending that the matters of daily life are disconnected from God and our responsibility to him. God is Lord of all, including the marketplace. [page 68]

26. Wealth is a Poor Source of Happiness.

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yield better returns than gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14) [page 82]

27. Wealth is a Rich Source of Temptation.

Better is a poor man whose walk is blameless than a rich man whose ways are perverse. (Proverbs 28:6) [page 83]

28. Wealth is Ultimately Worthless.

Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath ... (Proverbs 11:4) [page 85]

29. The Foolishness of Financial Haste.

The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty. (Proverbs 21:5) [page 86]

30. The Wisdom of Financial Diligence.

Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow. (Proverbs 13:11) [page 88]

31. Compounding Interest.

It is said that Albert Einstein once referred to compound interest as the greatest mathematical discovery of all time. Here is an example of compounding that is simple yet powerful.

If you had a piece of paper large enough to fold in half 50 times (and if you could actually, physically, fold it that many times) how high would it reach? Several feet? Two stories? To the highest treetops? How about a mile? *Ten* miles? Remember, every time you fold it, you double the previous thickness. Folding a piece of paper of average thickness fifty times would therefore produce a tower *more than 70 million miles high!* [page 89]

32. Being Attentive to Wealth Dangers.

In the end, Proverbs teaches us that acquiring wealth is a blessing, but one that comes with practical and moral risks. If we are informed by and attentive to wealth dangers and limitations, it is possible to acquire wealth virtuously and with relatively safety. [page 92]

33. God Uses Wealth to Fund His Work.

God has always used the wealth of his people to fund his work. The exchange of goods and services, whether by barter or the use of money, is simply part of how God's creation functions, and the church is no exception. If, as a general rule, we expect God to operate within the *physical* laws, it would be no surprise that he operates also within the *economic* laws, for all such laws are his. This means that God uses money in the workings of the economy to help accomplish his purposes. Some of that money he chooses to get from you and me as we voluntarily, regularly, thankfully, and cheerfully devote a portion of our material prosperity directly to his purpose. As we do so we find his work, and in giving our money away we fight against our constant tendency to set our hope on riches. [page 96]

34. Giving to God.

When giving to the poor, ultimately we honor the one from whom all blessings flow, and God promises to reward us for this, whether materially or otherwise. “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done” (Proverbs 19:17; see also Proverbs 22:9 and 28:7). As we “lend to the Lord,” we may be certain he will repay us. Not surprisingly, we are also warned against disobedience in this area. “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered (Proverbs 21:13; see also Proverbs 17:5).

Giving to God--first to the church but also to the poor—is not merely a command, duty, an obligation, but also a privilege and a joy. To give to the worthy poor is an important way by which we honor God with our wealth. [pages 100 and 101]

35. Holy Examples and Prayer Are Inheritances.

Charles Bridges wrote, “And if there is no earthly substance to leave; yet a church in the house; a family altar; the record of holy example and instruction; and above all, a store of believing prayer laid up for accomplishment, when we shall be silent in the grave--will be an inheritance to our children of inestimable value. [page 109]

36. A Friend Gives Earnest Counsel.

Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. (Proverbs 27: 9) [page 116]

37. A Friend Gives Trustworthy Corrections.

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. (Proverbs 27:6) [page 117]

38. The Nature of a True Friend.

Charles Bridges artfully illuminates the nature of a true friend:

What is the friend, who will be a real blessing to my soul? Is it enough, that he will humor my fancies, and flatter my vanity? Is it enough that he loves my person, and would spend his time and energies in my service? This comes far short of my requirement. 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. That genuineness of a friendship without this mark is more than doubtful; its usefulness utterly paralyzed. [page 118]

39. A Friend Gives Consistent Comfort.

A friend loves at all times, a brother is born for adversity. (Proverbs 17:17) [page 118]

40. A Friend Gives Counsel, Correction, and Comfort.

Do you have a friend who offers counsel, correction, and comfort? Is there a righteous man or woman in your life who knows how to sharpen the edge of your faith? Only the proud refuse these things (as we all do sometimes), and only those who have gone on to be with Christ are beyond the need of them. So in humility, seek such friends, and let them serve you. [page 121]

41. Having Non-Christian Friends.

Although Proverbs warns repeatedly against associating with the morally corrupt, this does not mean a Christian can never have non-Christian friends. Remember, Proverbs is not a book of laws, but a book of wisdom. The warnings there are not requirements. Rather, the wisdom books of Scripture are intended to inform us, to give us tools by which we can make good, godly decisions. [page 125]

42. Living in Sodom.

The way sin worked to corrupt Lot is the same way it always works. The process is almost completely predictable. Gradually we allow ourselves to be disarmed and

rendered defenseless. It starts when our clear view of sin becomes clouded, and our thinking about truth gets muddled. Echoes of the serpent's voice in the Garden (Genesis 3:1) began to enter our minds: "Has God really said" that this thing we are engaged in, or a drawn to, is actually wrong? We look out over the land where Sodom lies, and all always see is that it looks green and lush. So we move over there and start to settle in. Suppressing the initial pangs of conscience, we slowly begin, in the language of Proverbs 22:24-25 to "learn the ways" of the corrupt. [page 130]

43. Choosing a Spouse.

As William Arnot notes, "Our Father loves to be consulted in this great life-match for his children, and they who ask His advice will not be sent away without it." Step one in choosing the spouse wisely is to seek the Lord for his wisdom and favor. [page 144]

44. Trusting Scripture More than Ourselves.

Simply stated, we must trust Scripture more than we trust ourselves. We must believe that Scripture says *about us* more than we believe our own self-assessment. To humbly embrace our need for the counsel of others is to accept the fact that in a sense we must protect ourselves from ourselves. Thus, as soon as we begin to imagine that a particular person may be "the one", we will seek the counsel of many advisors. We will seek input from our parents, our pastor, and godly friends and mentors. We will find out what they think about the person who has caught our attention. Does this woman have the makings of a wife of noble character? Does this man have the makings of a Christ-like, self-sacrificing husband? We will take their answers seriously and bring the matter before the Lord in prayer. [page 146-147]

45. Self-examination in Looking for a Spouse.

Whether you are a woman looking for a noble husband, or a man looking for a noble wife, your first responsibility and priority is to take a sober look at yourself. After all, to be worthy of one who is noble, you must be noble yourself. Here are some key questions. With these you can begin a process of self-examination based on the teachings of Scripture.

- Are you a Christian?
- Do you fear the Lord?
- Are you committed to and active in a local church where the gospel is faithfully preached to?
- Are you seeking to deepen your relationship with God through prayer in the reading and study of Scripture?
- Are you modest and humble in your dress and behavior?
- Are you wise in your speech?

- Do you display the ability to put others before yourself?
- Have you begun to prepare yourself spiritually for marriage?
- Women, are you prepared to give yourself in Christ-like submission to the man whom God called to be your husband and spiritual head?
- Men, have you equipped yourself theologically to be the spiritual leader of your home, and are you willing to love your wife sacrificially? [pages 147 and 148]

46. Raising Children.

Raising children is one of the most challenging, painful, in joyous experiences we can encounter. It is also incredibly in an immeasurably significant to the Kingdom of God. If you have children, there is no more important calling in your life than to raise them according to the “training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). [page 170]

47. God's Wisdom on Child Rearing.

Truly the book of Proverbs is the most extensive an explicit resource on child rearing in the Bible.

How interesting, then, that Proverbs teaches no single method of parental discipline. Nor is there any one proverb or passage that captures everything we need to know in order to raise children well. Instead, Proverbs provides a rich fabric of teaching any individual strands. This means parents must do more than learn a few key verses about child-rearing--we must pursue God's wisdom on the topic.

In raising children, God has in mind that everyone involved, parents and children alike, would grow in wisdom. So as we begin our discussion, we want to start by seeking clarity on the purpose of discipline. [page 171]

48. Discipling Our Children.

God wants us to discipline our children. Proverbs reveals three motivations for this: For our children’s sake, our neighbor’s sake, and our own sake. Of course, we also do it for God's glory.

For Our Children’s Sake

He who spares the rod he hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24) [page 171]

49. Correcting Faults of Children.

Bruce Waltke explains the teaching of this proverb:

Loving parents seek to correct the faults of their children because ... their children’s lives, favor, protection, healing, dignity and prosperity are at stake.

Unloving parents turned their backs on them and hand them over to death, social ruin, public exposure, calamity, and shameful poverty. [page 172]

50. Giving Discipline.

We must remind ourselves continually to reject the unbiblical teachings of secular culture. Left entirely to themselves, children *will* follow harmful paths. Unless they are *given* discipline, they will not *gain* discipline. [page 172]

51. Premature Death without Discipline.

Undisciplined children, then tend to grow too into undisciplined adults, becoming a danger to themselves (and others). A child who never learned to live within the boundaries of his parents' rules will be more likely to be an adult to overstep the boundaries of God's moral law. In the long run, these children pay a high price for their parents' neglect, for society is not kind to the only disciplined adult.

According to Proverbs 19:18 and 23:13-14, poorly trained children can even suffer premature death. Of those young people who died tragically from being involved in drugs or crime, for example, how many do you imagine had careful, attentive, loving, biblical upbringings? Surely it is no exaggeration to say that the more neglectful the parent, the more unloving; and the more loving the parent, the more they attend to discipline with great care. [pages 172-173]

52. Character Formation.

Parents who love their children will not permit them to pay the high cost of an undisciplined life. Wise and loving parents recognized that childhood is the single most season of character formation. Charles Bridges, in his commentary on Proverbs, writes, "Our character largely takes form of that mold to which our early years were cast... If the crooked shoots of self-will and disobedience are not cut off, their rapid growth and rapidly growing strength will greatly increase the future difficulty of bending them." [page 173]

53. Loving One's Neighbor as Oneself.

A second motivation for faithfully disciplining our children is to help fulfill the commandment to love my neighbor as I love myself (Luke 10:27). Consider the son who is never made to fulfill his obligation as a child. This boy grows up, becomes a deadbeat dad, and brings years of pain to his wife and children. Consider the daughter who as a child never learned principles of modesty and the control of her sexual desire, and then matures into an adulterer, bringing destruction to entire families. The failure to discipline children has ripple effects far beyond the home. [page 174]

54. No Discipline, the Future Will Not Bode Well.

Bob Easley's summary of what Proverbs teaches on this point:

The book of Proverbs consistently repeats a warning to parents (Proverbs 13:24; 17:21; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-16). Something will be broken in your home; either your child's will, or your heart. The stripes from the rod of correction will either land on your child's rear end, or on your own. If it is the latter, then both you and your child will feel the pain. [page 176]

55. God Is Glorified with Good Behavior of Children.

When children are well-disciplined, it's a win for everyone. The children benefit by reinforcing good habits and growing in godly behavior. Parents are blessed and their lives are made easier. Society benefits because more mature, responsible individuals are joined its ranks. And above all, God is glorified as the behavior of our children points to Christ redeeming love. [page 177]

56. Godly Corrections.

But the verse [*Proverbs 6:23*] also implies a need for action. Discipline must be applied to the child from outside. That discipline must result in godly changes — “corrections”-- in both thinking and behavior. Only then can the child get on the right path, or “way”. If the discipline is not applied, or if it is of a kind that does not produce corrections in thought, word, indeed, then the child cannot even *get on* the path to life. The alternative is obviously some other path--and not one that the Bible calls life. [page 179]

57. Encourage Good Behavior.

Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. (Proverbs 4:7-8) [page 180]

58. Encourage Your Children.

Be lavish with your encouragement toward your children. Reinforced constantly for them the good news of how God's world works. Teach them that obedience and wisdom are the path of life. [Pages 182-183]

59. Discourage Bad Behavior.

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. (Proverbs 1:10) [page 183]

60. Speak Purposefully.

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. (Proverbs 27:5) [page 185]

61. Show Your Children You Love Them.

There are two extremely important differences between verbal discipline and corporal discipline. First, verbal discipline can be appropriate and helpful both before and after a child sins or behaves foolishly. Corporal discipline, on the other hand, is never appropriate except *in response to* a specific instance of sin or foolishness. Second, every instance of corporal discipline must be joined with verbal discipline so that the child understands as clearly as possible why the corporal discipline is being applied. Parents must use words to help their children connect the dots between the sin they committed and the discipline they're receiving. Parents must also use words to convey to their children that they love them. Make sure you hug them too, especially when the corporal discipline is over. [Page 186-187]

62. Biblical Discipline Shows Love.

As noted by biblical scholar Andreas Köstenberger, “Appealing to excessive cases that involve abuse does not justify abandoning spanking as a form of discipline. Children need to learn the consequences of wrong behavior, in spanking can be a useful means to convey that lesson.

Proverbs makes clear that corporal discipline of our children, biblically administered and coupled with verbal discipline, is truly an act of love. [page 187]

63. Correction Shows a Demonstration of the Foolishness of Rebellion.

Pastor Ted Tripp writes, “The rod of correction brings wisdom to the child. It provides an immediate tactile demonstration of the foolishness of rebellion. [page 188]

64. Never Discipline Children Out of Frustration or Anger.

When considering corporal discipline, parents must also pay close attention to their own motivations; they must examine their hearts. First, parents must never discipline their children out of frustration or anger. Corporal discipline should always be motivated by love for the child and exercised in a spirit of self-control. This is central to redemptive, biblical corporal correction. A wise parent always remembers that love, not angry self-righteousness, is the only appropriate motivation and the only biblical motivation for corporal discipline. Proverbs never associates parental discipline with anger, but with love. Considered, for example, Proverbs 13:24, “He who spares the rod *hates* his son, but he who *loves* him is careful to discipline him. [pages 189-190]

65. God Gives a Framework of Godly Thinking.

Graeme Goldsworthy tells us that in Proverbs, “God gives the framework for godly thinking but he will not do our thinking for us. We are responsible for the decisions we

make as we seek to be wise (to think in a godly way) and to avoid being foolish (to think in a godless way).” [page 196]