



Theme: Summer Wisdom in Proverbs and James

"Character and Wisdom"

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Weekly Memory Verse:

21 Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor. – Proverbs 21:21

Meditation Moments for Monday, July 13 – Our memory verse for the week is **Proverbs 21:21**, "*Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor.*" Pray this verse as you begin time with God today. Is there a word in this proverb that grabs your heart? What is that word and why does it speak to you today?

 Now read **Proverbs 18**. This chapter starts with a bang in verse 1. It's a reminder that our character begins deep inside and is meant to be shaped by the great commandments of loving God, and loving others, as we love ourselves. How we feel about ourselves often spills out onto others and it's good to remember that we can't give what we don't have. Have you ever been unfriendly to others because of something going on in your own life? How might you pay attention to your own character so you can give friendship to others who might have a gift to give you?

 How have you experienced the truth of verse 12 which talks about pride leading to destruction? What does verse 17 teach us about listening to all sides of a story before making a judgment? Verse 21 picks up, once again, the theme of the power of our lips. Which verses in this chapter address the issues you struggle with?

Prayer: *Gracious God, help me to let go of pride so I can see others the way you see them. May I be able to be a "real friend" to others by paying attention to what is going on inside of me, so my lips and my heart bless those around me. Amen.*

Tuesday, July 14 – Read aloud our memory verse for the week, **Proverbs 21:21**, “Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor.” Now read **Proverbs 19**.

 Verse 2 contains some profound words about the importance of slowing down in today's world. Have you ever gotten in trouble by rushing or not taking your time on a decision? This proverb also points to an important truth; that character develops over time. How might you slow down today to avoid making mistakes in haste? How can you create some margin to give you time to think, pray, and reflect on important decisions?

 Spend some time on verse 8. It has a connection to the second half of the great commandment from Jesus, which is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is this connection being made to wisdom and our character. The big idea is that acquiring wisdom is a way of loving ourselves, which impacts on our character. When have you found that wisdom has shaped you and made you a better person? Verse 19 speaks about those moments when our temper gets the best of us. How do you handle your anger? Has your temper ever “cost” you something?

Prayer: Choose 2 verses in this chapter you want to focus your prayers upon. Pray them by inviting God to shape your character through the wisdom in each verse. This is a powerful way to read and pray the proverbs.

Wednesday, July 15 – Read aloud **Proverbs 21:21**, the memory verse for this week, “Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor.” Now read **Proverbs 20**.

 Let's focus on verse 5 for a moment. Again, this points to wisdom developing our character which lies deep within our heart. Have you had someone in your life who has been able to draw out wisdom from you? One of the best ways to draw out wisdom from others is to ask good questions and be curious. How might you pause in your conversation with others and ask probing questions to help you, and the other person, better understand the wisdom that lies deep within? Some sample questions are, “Help me understand _____. What did you learn from that experience? Where do you think those feelings come from?”

 Verses 7-12 seem to flow together and speak of one issue that plagues every human, our tendency to judge others and be hypocritical. “Fundamental attribution error,” that describes this idea that when someone cuts us off in traffic, we think they are rude and inconsiderate; but when I cut someone off in traffic, I have a good reason because I'm late for an appointment! These proverbs warn us to pay attention to not only how we act, but the character underneath which influences how we act. Verse 12 invites us to remember to use our ears and eyes as we gather wisdom so we might avoid judging others AND pay attention to our own actions first. When have you been guilty of a double standard? How might you invite God to shape your character and become wise when it comes your own behavior?

Prayer: *God, may I use my ears to hear, and my eyes to see your glory. Help me to guard my own behavior and avoid looking at my own sin by being so focused on the sins of others, knowing that you are the forgiver, and the giver of grace. Amen.*

Thursday, July 16 – Our memory verse is in the middle of today's chapter we will read, **Proverbs 21:21**. Read this entire chapter slowly and see what else speaks to you. Which verses speak about our character?



What does this chapter teach you about the character of the wise? Notice verse 2 speaks of God looking at not only what we do, but more importantly the motive behind it. The big idea is that God sees ALL of us. God love us just the way we are, AND he loves us enough not to keep us there. If God is looking at your heart, what do you think God sees? Invite God to shape your character, knowing that God sees all of who you are, AND God sees what you can be.



Verse 26 captures a theme in Proverbs about how God views the resources we have been given in life. It's a reminder that our hearts are shaped by whether we hold onto stuff and money tightly, or whether we freely give. Do you find yourself wanting more and more because of how the culture often portrays that having the next best toy will make us happy? When have you experienced joy because of your willingness to give? When have you been blessed by others being generous towards you? How might you be generous today with your time and resources

Prayer: *Generous God, you see all of me and you know my heart. Teach me to be generous and guide me into a life that receives your blessings and then passes them onto others. Help me to let go and give my life and heart to you. Amen.*

Friday, July 17 – Recite this week's memory verse, **Proverbs 21:21**, once again, "Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor." Read **Proverbs 22**. As you prepare to read today's chapter, watch for verses that might help us understand the character God hopes is formed in us. Notice what is forbidden in the second half of the reading today. What do these verses teach us about character?



This chapter begins with two verses about money and resources that are entrusted to us by God. Verse 1 speaks about our character being more important than riches. How have you found this to be true in your own life? When have your possessions been put first in your life and how did that work out? Verse 2 talks about how God loves us regardless of how much we have in life, or how little we feel we have. When has the wealth in your life been a problem for you and put distance between you and God, others, or caused shame or pride in yourself? How might you keep in perspective the idea that your wealth or resources don't determine WHO you are?



Verse 6 is often misquoted and misunderstood. It is meant to remind us that what we give to our children will EVENTUALLY come back to them. But it's also important to remember that the statute of parental limitations expires when we turn 18 or become adults. At some point, we each must be responsible for our

own character. Have you ever blamed your parents for something that now is really your responsibility? Have you ever blamed yourself for something an adult child has done? How might you invite God today to help you claim what is yours in terms of your character, and then let go of the rest and give that to God?

Prayer: *Lord God, may I always remember that my possessions and stuff are temporary, and it ALL belongs to you...I just get to use it and give it. Help me to be generous in this life so my heart might be open to your plans for eternity. Remind me not to take on what is not mine and take responsibility for my own character by inviting you to shape it. Amen.*

Saturday, July 18 – Read once again your memory verse, **Proverbs 21:21**. How has it felt to read that this week? “Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love will find life, righteousness, and honor.” The last few chapters have said a lot about the poor, about how we look at riches and wealth, and about alcohol. As you read **Proverbs 23**, what do you learn about these themes?

 How have you seen verses 6-8 to be true? What does this call us to be? What do you learn about character in this chapter? Pray for God's help that you might have a character that coincides with what you've read. Regarding sparing the rod and spoiling the child in verses 13 and 14, these are often misunderstood and misapplied so we'll be considering these passages in the sermon in two weeks when we talk about “Relationship Wisdom.”

Prayer: *God, you speak to us these words in verse 19, “My child, listen and be wise: Keep your heart on the right course.” Help me to listen to your wisdom in these words today so my heart might stay on the right course. Amen.*