



Theme: Summer Wisdom in Proverbs and James

"Relational Wisdom"

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Weekly Memory Verse:

³Never let loyalty and kindness leave you. Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. – Proverbs 3:3

Meditation Moments for Monday, July 27 – Our memory verse for the week is **Proverbs 3:3**, "*Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.*" 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 3:1-10**.

 We read verses from this chapter several weeks ago, but we returned to it today as it talks about the benefits of wisdom especially when it comes to our relationships. The memory verse today talks about loyalty and kindness as important attributes to a friendship or really any relationship. Why do you think these two ideas are important in relationships? Have you been in a relationship where you have needed to practice loyalty and kindness even when it's hard? How did that work out, or not?

 We are meant to make a connection between human relationships where kindness and loyalty are critical and a relationship with God which is anchored in those same ideas? Verse 5 talks about trusting in the Lord with our heart just like we write the idea of love and faithfulness on our hearts. We have often talked in this series about how we can't give what we don't have. Have you received from God loyalty and kindness? Is there a way that you can foster those ideas in your relationship with God so that you have them to then give to others? Tying them around our neck it's a literal image because people in the

Hebrew culture would tie things around their neck to remind them of God's faithfulness. Many Christians today use crosses for the same reason. What do you do every day to remind yourself about God's loyalty and kindness and the truth that God made you to love you? What might you begin to do so that you can remember this truth?

Prayer: *Gracious God, loyalty and kindness are sometimes hard to come by. There have been times in my life where I have felt betrayed or that people have been mean to me that I thought loved me. Help me to receive from you what I may not have received from others so that I may then give that to the world. Amen.*

Tuesday, July 28 – Read aloud our memory verse for the week, **Proverbs 3:3**, “Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.” Now read **Proverbs 17:9-14**.

 We read this section several weeks ago, but it contains one of the passages that we used this weekend in worship, verse 9. We find this theme of forgiveness and not letting go of resentment often in the Proverbs. Remember that the writer of this book is looking back over his life and he's recognizing that relationships have been separated and even destroyed by unforgiveness and pride. Is there a relationship in your life where repair needs to happen by offering forgiveness, recognizing that forgiveness is not about saying that what happened is OK? How might love prosper in that relationship when faults can be overlooked and not dwelt upon?

 Verse 14 talks about starting a fight and how it is like breaching a dam. When have you found this to be true in your life and in your relationships? Is there something brewing within your heart that might lead to an argument or fight that it would be good to let go of for the sake of our relationship? The big idea is not that we don't deal with difficult problems but that we put them in perspective and decide which ones we want to address. Close in prayer asking God to give you discernment for which issues to address and which to let go.

Prayer: *Patient God, give me wisdom and discernment when it comes to my relationships. Help me to focus on things that are important and offer grace and love when needed to help build others up instead of tearing them down. Amen.*

Wednesday, July 29 – Read aloud **Proverbs 21:21**, the memory verse for this week, “Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.” Now read **Proverbs 18:19-24**.

 The end of this passage is another verse that we read in last weekend's message. It talks about “friends” that destroy each other but how real friends stick close to us like a brother or sister. Some of us may not have siblings or we are not close to them, but the word used in this proverb is more about brothers and sisters in faith, and how we need to find those people in our lives because it allows us to be full and rich. Who are the true friends in your life that you might need to call or write to today to thank them? How might you begin to invest in others so that you can be that kind of friend that sticks close?

 Developing close friendships takes work. Verses 19-21 tell us that part of the work happens with what we say and how we say it when it comes to building up relationships. The invitation is for us to be careful with our lips because that is what affects relationships as much as anything else. We often say actions speak louder than words, but we all know that words also carry power. What are some words you might use to invest in others and help them be encouraged? What words do you like to hear? Find a way to share those words with others this week.

Prayer: *God, may I use my lips to bless others so that it might bear fruit and a harvest not only in my own heart but in the lives of other people. Help me to remember that my lips have the power of life and death. Amen.*

Thursday, July 30 – Read aloud **Proverbs 3:3**, the memory verse for this week, “Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.” Now read **Proverbs 27:10-17**.

 Read verse 10 very slowly. We are reminded in this verse how important it is to invest in the neighbors and friends around us because sometimes our family is far away. List three people that you would be able to call if disaster strikes. If you're not sure about which three people you would call, then make a list of relationships that you can invest in so that you do have someone to call at 4:00 in the morning. Make a commitment to reach out to each of them this week and invite them to coffee or for a walk and ask if you can be that kind of friend for each other.

 We read verse 17 this last week in worship and it's one that has often been quoted as an important reminder of what friendship is meant to be about. The idea of sharpening each other as friends is about being able to ask each other tough questions and work through tough situations. Many times, in our world we have people trying to sharpen us and we have not given them permission to do so. If we are honest, sometimes we try to sharpen others, and they don't want our input. It's important to remember that unwanted advice is never well received. What people in your life do you have a mutual agreement with to sharpen each other? Reach out to them and ask them if this is true.

Prayer: *Loving God, you want me to have a relationship with you that allows me to be sharpened. When I am willing to do that with you then I am willing to do it with others so prepare my heart so I might grow and become the person you know I can be for myself and for others. Amen.*

Friday, July 31 – Recite this week's memory verse, **Proverbs 3:3**, “Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.” Read **Proverbs 24:1-22**. As you prepare to read today's chapter, watch for verses that might help us understand the kinds of relationships God wants for us.

 Verses 1 through 4 give us some profound insight into relationships and remind us that the company that we keep will affect every aspect of our lives. Do your relationships build you up or do they tear you down? Who do you choose to

spend time with and how does that affect how you live your life? The big idea and verse 4 is that wisdom and knowledge bring beautiful things into our lives because relationships are what bring life meaning and purpose. How might you invest in those kinds of relationships that bring life and not foolishness or evil?



Verses 19-22 Seemed to be the end of the original book of Proverbs, the rest are additional sayings that were collected after the first book was written. These final words are insightful as they speak to us about how we can fret because of the evil in the world and be envious of those who seem to get their way even though they do horrible things. But verse 20 makes it clear that ultimate hope does not lie with evil and that eventually God wins and the wicked are snuffed out. Then we are reminded again to be in awe and reverence of God so that we can experience true life. Do you ever find yourself being upset about things happening in the world that you have no control over? How might it help you to give those things to God and still do what you can to make the world a just and beautiful place? How might this change your relationships with God and others?

Prayer: Lord God, help me to remember that you have the ultimate say in good and evil, wisdom and folly. May I find my future hope in you knowing that you will bring about the ultimate justice and do what is right. Calm my heart and soothe my soul. Amen.

Saturday, August 1 – Read once again your memory verse, **Proverbs 3:3**, “Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart.” How has it felt to read that this week? What word or phrase have you carried with you and why? Read **Proverbs 24: 23-34**.



Read verse 26 slowly. We find this proverb in the midst of an entire section on justice and working hard. Have you ever had someone be honest with you and it has felt beautiful?



Now read verse 28 slowly. This verse echoes what Paul says in Romans 12:17 and the apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:9, “⁹Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you, his blessing.” There is this big idea in the scripture that the only way relationships last is if someone is willing to end the vicious cycles that can take a hold of our hearts when we want to retaliate or get even. End today with a prayer asking God to help you live out this proverb.

Prayer: God, give me strength and courage to be honest in my relationships but also to be kind and loyal. May I remember that when I live into kindness and loyalty it changes not only my relationships but the world around me. Your son Jesus offered me the ultimate kindness and grace on a cross. I received that gift today so I might offer it to others. Amen.