

SLIDE 1. Life Hacks. Part 4

A Study of the Book of Proverbs

Sunday July 23, 2023

Proverbs Chps. 17-29

I was intrigued by this LIFE HACK...

Imagine... you're sitting at the beach in White Rock. The tide is out, and you've found a slice of shade under the pier. You've set up your day camp – including your foldable chairs, a cooler, and maybe even – a blanket.

You'd like to head out into the water, but you have valuables you're worried about leaving behind.

Q. What do you do?

A. You bag them up in a clean diaper!

Rationale: Who is going to steal what looks like a dirty diaper?

Potential Problem: Until some good Samaritan or Eco-hero comes along and disposes of it for you!

We are in week 4 of our short teaching series on the BOOK OF PROVERBS – called LIFE HACKS – wise ways to live in God's world.

Let us imagine – again – here in week 4 - that we are sitting down with WISDOM for a little, morning side chat. WISDOM – here – as symbolized and as spoken from – this rather large bible – resting on this stool :)

We will again tiptoe through a # of chapters (17-29) for some nuggets of wisdom that stood out to me as I read them – which I hope may have stood out to you as well – or will stand out to you this week when you read them – or at least prove to be helpful to look at together this morning.

Let's get at it!

SLIDE 2. Chp. 17:17: *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

What kind of friend are you?

There's an old saying – that you have to be a good friend to make a good friend.

What kind of friend are you?

A good friend – according to Solomon – is always loving and helps in trying times.

A good friend is as valuable as a family member who would support you through hardship and trial.

A good friend is loyal – loving at all times!

Too many people are fair-weather friends. When the weather's good – they soak up the sun and shade with you in White Rock. They stick around when the friendship helps them, and they leave when they're not getting what they want out of the relationship, or it's an inconvenience, or worse – it's too demanding.

When the weather turns – though they ate your corn chips, swilled a couple of Bubles from your cooler, and sat in your beach chair – they flee the stormy scene with the first drop of precipitation – leaving you to pick up and pack up.

These fair-weathered friends aren't loyal – and they certainly aren't born to help you bear adversity.

What kind of friend are you?

SLIDE 3. Solomon shares a companion verse to this one – found a chp. later: *There are friends who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother* (Prov. 18:24, NLT).

Do you love your friends at all times?

What might be some of the measures?

Do you defend them when they are being falsely accused? Do you stop the gossip about them when it is starting?

SLIDE 4. Because – *A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends* (Prov. 16:28). Don't allow it. Ask it to stop. Short of it stopping – walk away.

Do you give your friends the benefit of the doubt? Do you stick with them when everyone else is leaving?

Do you sit with them in their sadness? Do you hurt with them? Do you cry with them? Do you sympathize with them or do you empathize with them? Do you feel sorry FOR them or do you feel sorry WITH them?

Paul instructed: *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2).

And this: *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep* (Ro. 12:15).

Do you help them see hope? Do you help them reframe realistically?

Do you extol their virtues? Do you affirm who they are to their face? Do you talk about them positively when you talk about them with others?

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (Eph. 4:29).

Do you thank them for their friendship?

Do you answer the phone at 3-in-the-morning because it's them? Do you lend them your truck? Do you drive them to the airport?

SLIDE 5. Do you challenge them to the highest good? As Solomon says later: *Do we sharpen them like iron sharpens iron* (Ps. 27:17)?

Do you commend them when they choose the highest good? Do you tell them that you are proud of them? Do you cheer them on? Do you correct them when they need correction? Do you keep them from hurting themselves?

Speaking of which...

SLIDE 6. Chp. 20:1: *Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*

I was led astray by them both as a young adult. And I was none the wiser for it.

Indeed, I did and said foolish things when I drank too much. I was expelled from high school events. I hurt and lost friendships. I spent too much money on alcohol. I blurred things worth remembering. I woke up many next days with a taciturn stomach and a throbbing headache. I lost my license during teacher's college - for driving under the influence of alcohol. I threw up on a double date!

Nothing good came from me drinking too much.

"But it relaxes you!" mocks wine.

"It's like liquid courage!" entices beer, the brawler.

The one softening you up – the other making you think you aren't soft.

This said - Scripture doesn't forbid the drinking of alcohol, but it clearly identifies drunkenness as sinful.

SLIDE 7. *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit* (Eph. 5:18).

Don't get drunk. It leads to debauchery – which is to say – corruption, depravity, indecency. Been there. Done that. Proved the point.

Instead – Instead of being out of control – be controlled by the Spirit of God – let the Spirit of God lead you and guide you – not the spirits of Heineken and the Naked Grape!

"But!" you might object, "wasn't Jesus' first miracle turning water into wine?"

Yes. But doing so didn't green light us for drunkenness. "But," you might object a second time, "didn't Paul prescribe the use of wine to Timothy for medicinal purposes?" To which I might inquire, "What seems to be ailing you?"

I remember Pastor Wally Mills used to say, "You'll never become addicted to alcohol if you don't take that first sip."

It's true – but it did seem a little bit fear-based.

Drink. Don't get drunk. Wise people don't get drunk – and – Solomon implies here – drunkards are *not* likely to "become wise" – thanks to a life derailed by drinking.

Good friends keep us from hurting ourselves.

SLIDE 8. Chp. 22:24-25: *Do not make friends, however, with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.*

If we have to be a good friend to make a good friend – we also need to be discerning about the friendships that we make and keep.

Solomon's advice – here - counsels us against becoming too closely associated with someone who cannot control their temper.

As a friend *or* as a business associate.

SLIDE 9. Here's why: *An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins* (Prov. 29:22).

These are the ways of a man who cannot control his temper: he creates disagreement, and he is characterized by his sins.

Here's the problem: People tend to become like the people with whom they spend the most amount of time – the negative and positive characteristics of our friends – then – tend to rub off on us.

So, we need to choose our friends wisely.

As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:33: *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."* The converse is implied: good company supports good character!

SLIDE 10. Solomon says this about maintaining such friendships: *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm* (Prov. 13:20).

Hot heads bring about trouble.

SLIDE 11. Again – Solomon makes the point: *A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated* (Prov. 14:17).

And so they often accumulate enemies who oppose them – and those enemies often end up hating anyone associated with them. Companions of fools – friends of the quick-tempered – then - suffer harm – by association.

Keeping such friends is tantamount to *choosing* a bad influence.

This doesn't mean – though – that we should never interact with anyone who has a temper. It just means that (maybe) we shouldn't make them the person with whom we spend the most amount of time.

Perhaps we should say this too – there is a world of difference between a hot-tempered man and expressing anger – a world of difference between someone who is characterized as an angry person and someone who expresses anger appropriately.

Not all anger is counter-productive or destructive.

SLIDE 12. Paul says: *Be angry and do not sin* (Eph. 4:26). So, there seems to be an anger we can express without sinning.

For instance – I think abuse or mistreatment of others should anger us. I think injustices should anger us. I think any gospel preached that adds to the finished work of Jesus should anger us (it did – Jesus – think about how he spoke to the Pharisees).

I think there might even be some room for us to be angry about death – as Jesus seemed to be when He wept (when he was deeply troubled in his spirit) for his friend, Lazarus – whom he raised from the dead.

As one commentator put it: "His great wrath against death – subdued into tears of love."

But I also think that our anger – if it has a chance of being redemptive - needs to fuel us with a holy discontent that would lead us to take restorative action.

This might keep us from sinning.

Yet anger is closely tied to sinful attitudes. So, there's some tension here.

Be angry.

And do not sin.

As Paul warns otherwise: *Let all bitterness and wrath and **anger** and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice* (Eph. 4:31).

Be careful with your anger.

And be cautious about making and keeping hot-tempered friends.

They do foolish things (Prov. 14:7).

Speaking of which...

SLIDE 13. Chp. 29:11: *A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

A fool gives full vent to his anger...

And he feels justified in doing so.

He's flooded – to borrow an expression from contemporary counseling – flooded with anger – and he lets it overflow.

Self-control is a mark of godly wisdom...

When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Prov. 10:19).

SLIDE 14. *Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control (Prov. 25:28).*

A foolish person lets his emotions control him.

This verse uses a Hebrew phrase associated with stopping the motion of a liquid, such as waves in a sea or water sloshing in a bucket (BibleRef commentary).

This pictures for us how difficult it is to control our temper or hold in angry words.

Ever try to stop a bucket of water in mid-air from splashing you?

How 'bout the water coming your way in a splash battle in a pool!

There's no supposed Jedi move here to stop the motion of liquid. But there is Jesus.

Dangerous waves were threatening to capsize his disciples – his friends. He calmed the storm – he "stilled" the waves with a word. Well – more like 3 words. *"Quiet! Be still!"* (Mk. 4:39).

The solution to a lack of self-control (because it's so hard to exercise it!) is God's influence through the Holy Spirit.

It takes more than willpower. It takes Spirit power. It takes believing that self-control is better than out-of-control. It takes faith that God will transform you as you depend on him.

What area or areas of your life has Jesus transformed? What current area in your life are you allowing – are you partnering with Jesus to transform?

I would say – for me – among many things - Jesus has transformed my life from death to life through his death and resurrection, that he transformed my vocation – from teacher to pastor, that Jesus transformed my life when he brought Jackie into it through unusual circumstances – from single to married man, that he transformed my life again with children – his curriculum to help me be less selfish and my joy to have them, that Jesus transformed my relationship with alcohol from addiction to sobriety, that he transformed my language from characteristic swearing to the characteristic use of encouraging words.

“What are we working on these days?” you might ask.

All kinds of things. All the time :)

This week – we were working on patience and perspective-taking.

We had 32 campers at our ATHLETES IN ACTION – MULTI-SPORT CAMP – this past week. It was awesome! More on that in September.

For now – let me say this – it wasn’t awesome all the time!

There was one camper, for instance, who regularly resisted being dropped off for camp and left here. He said he didn’t want to be here – and I believed him!

Ordinarily – I would be inclined to reassure him, and pep talk him into participation. But, I realized, that would be more about me than him. More about my impatience with him, more about the inconvenience he’d be to the leaders, more about his anti-motivational presence in front of the other campers, more about how going at his own pace might overthrow the cosmic order of things as planned.

So, I began to wonder, “What is it like for this kid to be here? What’s going on in him? What’s his backstory?” Answering these questions – I was able to see him more as a child to be cared for than a problem to be solved.

That’s what God’s influence through the Holy Spirit can do. It can transform the way you see people and their circumstances.

So, at times this week, he could be seen lying down on the floor (within supervision) having a nap. And then – he would participate! And did – wholeheartedly – because we didn’t force him.

Even to helping a wee one find her Gatorade bottle.

SLIDE 15.

Friends love at all times.

Fools let alcohol lead them astray.

The wise control their anger.

Take your pick – for LIFE HACK #4.