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*Reverence for YHWH is the beginning of wisdom; and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

*--Proverbs 9: 10*

I normally discourage the use of scripture for “self-help.” The bible, generally speaking, isn’t a great go-to source for determining morality. Slavery, oppression, authoritarianism, and various other atrocities are found throughout and those passages have been used to support some of the most immoral acts in history. Instead of a moral guide, the bible is a tool to understanding how humans and God relate to one another. Time and again, when people hurt one another and even strive to mess up their relationship with God, God keeps coming back for more. God is always working to bind up the broken hearted. The bible goes way beyond morality to radical love.

There is one really good exception, though, for people wanting a bit of “self-help.” That is the book of Proverbs. It is chock full of great advice for anyone wanting to do their best to love God, love neighbor, and, just maybe, thrive in a challenging world. One, in particular, that I should probably tape to my forehead would be, “When we control our mouth and our tongue, we keep ourselves out of trouble. (21:23).”

King Solomon is credited with writing the biblical proverbs. As the story goes (1 Kings 3), God loved him very much and offered him a gift of his choosing. Solomon didn’t ask for long life, money, or power, he asked for wisdom. This really pleased God, so God granted this to Solomon and asked that Solomon always follow YHWH and no other gods. Solomon reigned for 40 years and for most of that, he kept his focus on God. Unfortunately, his wisdom also led to lots of wealth and power. These can corrupt even the wisest of people. He also accumulated a whole lot of wives (700!) from all over the region and, as he entered old age, worshiped their gods with them. God was upset about this and divided the kingdom of the Israelites into two. Never again would the Israelites experience the prestige and power that it did under Solomon.

Fortunately for us, Solomon did have several decades of wisdom straight from the Almighty. He wrote down advice for “his children,” which is really all of his followers and all who came later. That is what we find in the book of Proverbs. One really neat thing about this book, is that it is 31 chapters long. That is the same number of days in most months – including this one!

As we make our way through Lent and to Easter, a wonderful way to grow spiritually and get a bit of self-help advice, would be to set a goal of reading one chapter a day. You can underline the verses that seem especially applicable to you. I also give you permission to ignore the ones that don’t. For example, the last passage in chapter 31 is hyper focused on a perfect wife, who seems to do all the work in her family while her husband goes and hangs out with his friends. That is just a recipe for disappointment. Keep in mind Solomon had 700 wives and also 300 concubines. If he knew what made for a perfect wife, then he sure didn’t act like it.

I would love to hear from you what proverbs you find interesting. Are there some you would like throw out? Are there some you’d like to bring to the attention of someone else? I look forward to learning from you too!