

Date: November 3, 2019

Title: The Heart of the Matter

Text: Proverbs 4:23, etc.

Big Idea: Wise or foolish character is rooted in wise or foolish hearts.

1. ***Proverbs are not meant to be read through quickly.*** Rather, they're to be meditated on, chewed on, and assimilated into life. They are written in a style that engages not only the mind, but the gut.
2. ***The majority of proverbs are built with an important literary device called parallelism.*** Parallelism is the correspondence in two or more lines that accentuates their meaning. Let's look at two examples of parallelism:
 - a. ***Synonymous Parallelism*** is when two lines echo each other, the second often deepening or focusing the first.
 - b. In ***antithetical parallelism***, the second line brings out the meaning of the first by displaying its opposite.
3. ***The third important trait of the proverbs—and perhaps the most difficult to grasp—is that they rarely teach universally valid truths.*** Now, there are some exceptions to this in Proverbs, but in general, not every proverb is applicable to every situation at every time. Proverbs require the right time and the right circumstances to hold true. **Read Proverbs 26:4-5.**
4. ***Finally, an important corollary to this concept is that proverbs are neither Law nor Promises.***

When we treat a proverb like an iron-clad promise (Proverbs 10:27) or a black-and-white law, we end-up misreading the genre of Proverbs and do violence to the Scripture as God has given it to us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE WISE?

As we saw last week, there is a choice to be made between the Way of Wisdom and the Way of Folly. The choice we make will dictate something that is core to our being: our *character*. The concept of *character* can simply be defined as who we are when no one is watching. According to Proverbs, each of us can have either *wise* character—and be a Wise Person; or, we can have *foolish* character—and be a Fool.

What are some of the distinctions made in Proverbs between the Wise and the Fool?

THE CENTRALITY OF THE HEART

As you read Proverbs, it's difficult to miss the centrality of the *heart*: **Read Proverbs 4:20-23**

What is meant by “the heart”?

What does the book of Proverbs say about the actions of a wise heart? A foolish heart?

THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY

Because our heart—rather than our behavior—is more important to our character, the great danger and the biggest hurdle to wise character is the danger of hypocrisy. **Read Proverbs 26:23-25**