

## Apples of Gold

In the book of Proverbs there is much advice for the family with problems as well as the solution to those problems if this advice is heeded. The book provides instruction on both how to give and heed the advice and counsel of GOD. One is wise if he receives (heeds) the instruction of GOD contained in the Bible. The one needing rebuke has responsibility as to whom he places his confidence in. In Proverbs 25:17 we read, "...confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint."

One is also wise if he gives GOD'S rebuke. This will be the focus of this article—'Apples of Gold'. The 25th chapter of Proverbs deals with 'words fitly spoken'. In verse 12, we find these words of wisdom, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear."

Notice it takes both a wise rebuker AND an obedient ear to be likened to an ornament of fine gold. One without the other will not benefit. In chapter 15:23, we find "...a word spoken in due season, how good it is." We learn from this that knowledge of when to speak (in due season) is needed to be the proverbial 'apple of gold'. Isaiah was a wise person because he knew "...how to speak a word in season to him who is weary." (Isaiah 50:4)

In Proverbs 26, we are shown the results of words spoken to the weary 'out-of-season'. In verse 7, we find the following comparison: "like the legs of the lame that hang limp is the proverb in the mouth of fools." In verse 9 we read, "Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools." In Proverbs 25:17 we read, "Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you."

The teaching of this proverb has relevance to our words resulting in 'apples of gold'. Knowing when to intervene and when not to intervene is just as important as offering rebuke rather than throwing in our "two cents worth" to one who is in need

of counsel. Wisdom is needed to be able to make a distinction between things that are important and things that are not important. Otherwise, our neighbor becomes “weary and will hate” us.

Solomon states in Proverbs 25:20 that “like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, and like vinegar on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.” This teaches us what will result when the wrong words are spoken.

In Proverbs 27, we read the “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (v. 6). “Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man’s friend does so by hearty counsel” (v. 9).

It has to do with discretion and spiritual discernment. The difference is, without discretion and spiritual discernment, one gives his own “two cents worth” and not GOD’S rebuke. An ill-advised word will only make matters worse. As a friend even with good intentions, unless one offers GOD’S counsel, with spiritual discernment and handling aright the scriptures, then, damage will be done by our words. Discretion can only come from spiritual growth and spiritual growth can only come from listening to instruction from GOD on an ‘on-going’ basis. Such discernment helps us to know what is important, and what is not, in the lives of others. It applies in a marriage, in a family and in a congregation. If we do not follow GOD’S advice when involved in the lives of others, then our actions can only be termed ‘meddling’, and only one thing will result—our neighbor will “become weary and hate” us.

The New Testament speaks on the subject of those who would meddle. They are called “busybodies” in 1 Timothy 5:13. We are told they are “wandering about from house to house” and “saying things which they ought not”. In 2 Thessalonians 3:11, they “walk among you in a disorderly manner”. In 1 Peter 4:15, their concern is “in other people’s matters”.

It may be that we meddle out of pride where even the simplest thing in another’s life has to suit us. It may be an obsessive power thing where we want more control,

maybe out of pride thinking that we know best. We need to remember, man does not know what is best—only GOD does. It may be out of boredom, because we are not busy enough with the great matters of life, those of eternity. Laziness is a sin—Proverbs 23:14 says, “In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty.” Whispering and gossip are among the things that will destroy a friendship. Proverbs 17:9 says, “He that repeats a matter separates friends.” We should use gracious speech. Proverbs 22:11 says, “He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.” Proverbs 15:2 says, “The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.” Does your tongue use knowledge rightly? In Proverbs 15:28 we read, “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.” Does your heart study HOW to answer? Proverbs 12:18 says, “There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.” We need to ‘study how to answer’, and we will promote spiritual health among our physical family and friends as well as our spiritual family.

Meddling causes division among one’s natural family and among GOD’S spiritual family, the church. Our aim should not be to meddle, but to help. Therefore great care should be taken in what, when and how we speak. Proverbs 16:23 says, “The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.” Proverbs 21:24 says, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” If ‘weariness and hatred’ has thus far been the result of our intervention, we are meddling, not helping—we have been in our neighbor’s house ‘too often’. We need to stop our current involvement, be patient, and allow for our spiritual growth until such time that we can impart GOD’S rebuke. We need to pray for ‘knowledge’, for ‘discretion’, and study ‘how to answer’ and so to be a ‘wise rebuker’ (Proverbs 25:12); and pray that such rebuke will then fall upon an “obedient ear”.

GOD’S plan will work if we will work His plan. rdb