

Biblical Training. September, 2014. Bruce K. Waltke
Proverbs and Politics.

Introduction

I. Definitions

- A. Ethics: a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts and rules of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral diversity.
- B. Morals: Ethics and morals both relate to “right” and “wrong” conduct. Ethics, however, refers to the series of rules provided to an individual by an external source, e.g. their profession, the university guided by the Enlightenment, or the church guided by the Bible. Morals refer to an individual’s own principles regarding right and wrong. Morals are often derived from ethics.

N.B. Proverbs aims to make the Solomon’s ethics/wisdom the son’s/the disciple’s morals. “The proverbs of Solomon ... to know [personally] wisdom” (1:1, 2).
- C. Politics: involves the debate or conflict among individuals or parties with different views of ethics and morality, having or hoping to achieve power in government over those with other views of ethics and morality.
 - 1. Oxford Dictionary: “The activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.
 - 2. Applied to Book of Proverbs: The activities associated with achieving the wisdom of Book of Proverbs in the governance of America over those of wicked men and women, whose ethics are derived from what is right in their own eyes and whose morals may include killing the innocent.
 - 3. Bill Moyers: Ideas are great arrows, but there has to be a bow. And politics is the bow of idealism.

II. Christian involvement in political activity

A. Negative assessment of Christian involvement in politics because of:

- 1. Separation of church and state: a metaphorical description of the distance between religion and the civil government. But that difference varies in Christian understanding.

- a. Historically (Jefferson): State should not interfere with humankind's worship and conscience.

N.B. Humankind's worship and conscience will influence their political activities

- b. Some organized "Christian" religions (e.g. Anabaptist and their descendants-- Amish, Mennonites, Quakers—and in the 20th century Jehovah Witnesses) it means not to be involved in politics in any way: they refuse to vote, carry arms or participate in civil government in any way. They believe that by not participating in government they are closer to the kingdom of God, since Jesus answered Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36).

N.B. Fails to recognize that Christians belong to the civil government and the spiritual Kingdom of God:

"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Matth. 22:21)

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." (Romans 12:1—7)

2. Church should prioritize its time and efforts to save souls. The world is likened to a sinking ship from which people need to be saved. When a ship is sinking, you don't shine its brass. You make every effort to get people into life boats.

N.B. Christian political activity is not shining brass on a sinking boat but rather being salt and light in a corrupt and dark world. Christian political activity keeps the boat from sinking into Sheol and Abaddon. English reformers in the 19th century, such as Gladstone, saved England from the hell of the French revolution and subsequently from Napoleon's debatably dictatorship and conquest of Europe. Abraham Lincoln emancipated Afro-Americans, and Martin Luther King gave them equality. This is more than shining brass; it is giving people a life.

3. Politics is a dirty business. Cannot wear a white suit into a coal mine and expect to come out of it without a black spot.

Mark Twain: “No public interest is anything other or nobler than a massed accumulation of private interests.” Private interests are largely selfish. Like going into a coal mine: cannot come out clean. Kevin on “Shark Tank”: “Its all about money, all of the time.”

José Maria de Eça de Queiroz (generally considered to be the greatest Portuguese writer in the realist style [i.e., depictions of everyday life]: “Politicians and diapers should be changed frequently and all for the same reason.”

Harry S. Truman (*Plain Speaking*) that "My choice early in life was either to be a piano player in a whorehouse or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference."

Ronald Reagan: Politics is supposed to be the second-oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first. ~Ronald Reagan

4. Church loses its universal appeal

Alexis de Tocqueville: “When religion becomes allied with a political party it loses its universal appeal. By sharing the passions of the world, defending the peculiar interests of its political allies, and joining the temporal power of the state it merely created animosity and alienation. (Norman Graebner, “Christianity and Democracy: Tocqueville’s Views of Christianity in America,” *Journal of Religion*, 56, No. 3 (July, 1976)

Jerry Falwell, founder of Moral Majority: “The only difference between Republicans and Democrats is Republican drink better whisky than Democrats.”

N.B. Above, politics is defined above in terms of values, not party allegiance. Church has a prophetic obligation to clean up politics.

B. Positive assessment of Christian involvement in political activity because:

1. Politics-- is inevitable and inescapable.

a. Proverbs originally composed for budding, governing officials. Its ethics were then democratized to shape the morals of the nation.

N.B. The word “king” occurs 34x in the book. Royal proverbs serve as exemplars for good government

b. Prologue to Proverbs: Many lectures and sermons represent a conflict of Solomon’s ethics versus morals of wicked.

1.) Parent’s 1st lecture: two views of life compete for souls of youth: parents versus wicked men.

⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

....
¹⁰ My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. (Proverbs 1:8—10)

2.) Parents’ 7th—9th lectures: parent’s values versus those of wicked woman

My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. (5:1—4)

3.) Woman Wisdom addresses the masses of humanity, especially the uncommitted, at the city gate (see below)

a.) ²⁰ Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square;

²¹ on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech:

²² "How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?

How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?
(1:20---23)

b.) ¹ Does not Wisdom call out?

and Understanding raise her voice?

² At the highest points beside the way,

at the crossroads she takes her stand;

³ Beside the gates leading into the city,

at the entrance, she cries aloud:

⁴ "To you, O people, I call out;

I cry aloud to you, humankind.

⁵ You who are uncommitted, gain prudence;

and you who are foolish, set your hearts on it. (8:1—5)

4.) Epilogue: Two rival banquets representing Wisdom’s and Folly’s moral values.

³ Wisdom has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city,

⁴ "Let all who are simple come to my house!" (9:3—4)

¹⁴ Folly sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city,

¹⁵ calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way,

¹⁶ "Let all who are simple come to my house!" (9:14—16)

c. Salvation History a metanarrative of the struggle between good and evil to rule the world

1. Satan is a political activist, competing with God for power and leadership on earth. He seduced Adam and Eve to join his anti-god party, and he tried unsuccessfully to seduce the Lord Jesus Christ to rule within his kingdom. This conflict is the metanarrative of the Bible.
2. Christ commands his disciples to baptize all nations: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18—20)

d. Thoughtful quotes

Aristotle: "Man is by nature a political animal." By nature people seek to influence one another.

N.B. Mankind is more than an economic and political animal; each human is the image of God and so to represent the rule of God.

Med Yones [President of International Institute of Management]: "It is not possible to have a politics-free organization. The desire for power is part of human nature, our business and our world."

Molly Ivins (an American newspaper columnist, author, liberal, political commentator, and humorist): "You can't ignore politics, no matter how much you'd like to."

2. Politics, God and ethics are inseparable. (I lean heavily here on D. Vincent Twomey, "Introduction to Christianity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in *The Essence of Pope Benedict XVI*, edited by John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), pp. 1—13)

- a. Today, Marxist and secularist at best restrict God to the private, not political, realm and at the worse declare “God is dead.” As Nietzsche observed: once that credo reaches the masses-- as it has-- everything changes—as it did in the 1960s .
- b. It makes a world of difference whether God is acknowledge in the common activities of public life as One who from whom we derive and to whom we are going; a God who suffers with the afflicted and judges all; a God who sets limits and standards of human behavior; a God who loves sinners and humbles himself to death on a cross.
- c. It makes a world of difference whether Jesus Christ is the Logos (“Word”: outward, creative form of inward thought): the unblemished revelation of God, Truth and Wisdom.
- d. Without such a God and Logos, “everything is permissible” (Dostoyevsky). No life is safe. God died in the 19th century; man died in the 20th century: “a shadow cannot produce a shadow.”
 - 1) man becomes a technological animal: human embryos are artificially cultivated as “research material.”
 - 2) Albanian girls are for sale in a world-wide sex trade
 - 3) Violence increases in our public schools
 - 4) Marriage is redefined as a fruitless relationship in homosexuality
 - 5.) If the church acquiesces to behave as though God does not exist in order to get along, it defaults on its fundamental obligation to be light and salt

d. Thoughtful quote

Mohandas K. Gandhi . [Indian Leader, Peace Guru]: “Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.”

3. A just government is the foundation for a nation’s economic prosperity social well-being.

Without a just government philanthropy is mostly wasted. Gary Haugen, *The Locust Effect*. Injustice in a country is as devastating as the locust plague that destroyed America’s bread basket in the 1930s. It is a plague of hidden, everyday violence, like rape, trafficking, bribes and police brutality. The plague is spawned by the rich and powerful.

4. In a democracy every eligible citizen rules: people replace the king

a. Proverbs: concerned with establishing a just society through a good king (government).

1.) Proverbs 16:1—15

a.) The LORD's sovereign and righteous rule (16:1—9)b.)

(1.) The LORD's sovereignty and human's responsibility

¹ To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the LORD comes the proper answer of the tongue.

² All a person's ways seem pure in his own eyes, but the LORD is the one who evaluates motives.

³ Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

⁴ The LORD works out everything to its proper end

(2.) The LORD's morality and human accountability

-- even the wicked for a day of disaster.

⁵ The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: That person will not go unpunished.

⁶ Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD evil is avoided.

⁷ When the LORD takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them.

(3.) LORD's morality and sovereignty and human accountability

⁸ Better a little with righteousness than a large income with injustice.

⁹ The heart of a human being plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

b.) The LORD's mediated rule through his righteous rule (16:10—15)

(1.) The king's authority and morality

¹⁰ An inspired verdict is on the king's lips; and his mouth does not betray justice.

¹¹ A just balance and hand scale belong to the LORD; all the weights in a pouch are his work.

(2.) The king's moral sensibility

¹² Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.

¹³ Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value the one who speaks what is right.

(3.) The king's power of death and life

¹⁴ A king's wrath is a messenger of death, but the wise will "atone" [appease] it.

¹⁵ When a king's face brightens, it means life; his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.

c. Comments

1. "LORD" occurs in every verse of 1—9, except v. 8, and "king" in every verse of 10—16, except v. 11.

LORD occurs in verse 11, for he is the Author of the king's justice. The LORD expects righteousness and justice (v. 8) and the king upholds justice (v. 11)

2. Compare “the LORD detests” with “kings detest” (vv. 5, 12) and “the LORD takes pleasure” and “kings take pleasure (vv. 7, 13). Both the LORD and king have moral sensibility.
4. The LORD could be inserted for “king” in vv. 10—15.
5. The king’s just verdicts and moral sensibilities have little value unless he has the will and power to effect them.
5. Summary: The sovereign LORD mediates his justice on earth through his wise and just king.

2.) When a king sits on his throne to judge,
he winnows out all evil with his eyes. (20:8)

“Throne”: the symbol of authority and is associated with justice. The king is God’s vice-gerent in the administration of justice. The king’s throne was at the right hand of God’s throne that housed the Ten Commandments.

“winnows”: scatters and drives off in various directions. When people are the object the verb pictures a defeat so devastating that none survive to take root again against the victor

“with his eyes”: symbolizes his discernment. His keen discernment is a gift from God.

3.) In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water
that he channels toward all who please him. (21:1)

A good ruler reciprocally depends on the piety and morality of the ruled

b. Thoughtful quotes

John Gardner [Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Lyndon Johnson]: “The citizen can bring our political and governmental institutions back to life, make them responsive and accountable, and keep them honest. No one else can.”

Elie Wiesel [awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, 1986): “It may well be that our means are fairly limited and our possibilities restricted when it comes to applying pressure on our government. But is this a reason to do nothing? Despair is not an answer. Neither is resignation. Resignation only leads to indifference, which is not merely a sin but a punishment”

5. The wise recognize they are in a spiritual war with fools.

a. Proverbs

1.) The conflict

How long will mockers delight in mockery
and fools hate knowledge? (1:22)

The bloodthirsty hate a person of integrity
and seek to kill the upright. (29:10)

N.B. Advocates of “co-exist” are dangerously naïve



2.) The sluggard is defeated in this conflict

³⁰ I went past the field of a sluggard,
past the vineyard of someone who has no sense;
³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds,
and the stone wall was in ruins.
³² I applied my heart to what I observed
and learned a lesson from what I saw:
³³ A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest--
³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a thief
and scarcity like an armed man. (30:30—34)

b. Quotes

1.) Lord Jesus Christ

"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." (Matt 12:43—45). And that is how America is in the 21st century after Billy Graham's revivals in the second half of the 20th century. An apostate mission field is worse than an unchurched mission-field: the ground is hard, not arable (i.e., capable of being plowed and cultivated].

2.) Apostle Paul

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Eph 5:11—18)

3.) Matthew Henry:

"They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us."

DISCIPLINE

6. **The wise restrain evil by punishing wrong doers,***a. Proverbs*

²⁵ Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence;
rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge (19:25).

b. Thoughtful quotes

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

"There is only one way to salvation, and that is to make yourself responsible for all men's sins. As soon as you make yourself responsible in all sincerity for everything and for everyone, you will see at once that this is really so, and that you are in fact to blame for everyone and for all things."

N. B. A theme of this book is that even minor actions can touch heavily on the lives of others, and that we are "all responsible for one another".

Lord Jesus Christ:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be

thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt 5:13-16)

7. Non-involvement is a vote for the wicked

If you falter in a time of trouble,
 how small is your strength!
 Rescue those being led away to death;
 hold back those staggering toward slaughter.
 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this,"
 does not he who weighs the heart discern [the truth]?
 Does not he who guards your life know it?
 Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done? 24:10—12

“If”: a hypothetical lie
 “you say”: as a defendant in a court of law
 “we”: escapes personal culpability in community indifference.
 “this”: the innocent, unjustly perishing
 “does not”: demands an emphatic affirmative answer
 “and”: adds his omnipotence to his omniscience
 “guards your life”: If the son turns a blind eye to innocent victims, the LORD will turn a blind eye to the son, when the son is in crisis
 “repay”: the active LORD is unlike the passive coward.

b. Thoughtful quotes

George Jean Nathan [American author, editor, and drama critic, who is credited with raising the standards of play producers and playgoers alike]:

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.”

Plato: “One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors.”

“The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

Dante Alighieri: “The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis.”

Paulo Freire [Brazilian educator]: “Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”

Justice William O. Douglas [Associate justice of Supreme Court: 1939—1975]: “As nightfall does not come all at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air however slight, lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness.”

8. The freedom and opportunity of future generations depend on the present generation’s political action.

a. Book of Proverbs addressed by Israel’s parents to their youths

b. Thoughtful quotes

John Adams:

“I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.”

9. Apostolic teaching and practice

a. Teaching:

1.) Romans 13:1—8 (God’s servant for righteousness; when serves unrighteousness it steps out from under the rule of God)

2.) 1 Timothy 2: 1—2. I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people-- ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” If we are to pray for those in authority, then, if we are the authority, should we not govern in a way that leads to peace and quiet, and that way is the Book of Proverbs.

b. practice

The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. (Acts 16:36—39)

10. Anti-Christian bias—a “wicked” bias-- in American government demands a righteous response.

a. Destruction of nuclear family: same sex marriage.

b. Destruction of American liberty: government versus individual conscience and privacy.

Body

I. Introduction: Hermeneutical issue

A. Differences:

1. Theocracy versus separation of church and state
2. Monarchy versus democracy: absolute power vested in a king versus distributed power vested in the people.
3. Citizen of democracy both ruler and ruled.

B. Resolution:

1. Fear of the LORD versus fear of God: a standard of morality recognized by revelation versus conscience.
2. Abstraction for both: both concerned with establishing a moral government of righteousness and justice.
3. Lecture pertains to Proverbs teachings on being a ruler and ruled.

II. Motivations for a righteous and just government

A. For the good of the governed

1. Proverbs

a. For emotional well-being: elation and joy

- 1.) In the prosperity of the righteous a city rejoices,
And when the wicked perish, there is a shout of praise. 11:10

The righteous use their ‘good’ to promote the civic good.

- 2.) When the righteous triumph, the splendor is great;

but when the wicked rise to power, mortals must be searched out people

28:12

“splendor”: i.e., public splendor of people who have come out of hiding.

“rise to power”: entails “swing into action”

“searched out”: as with lamps from their hiding places. People do not venture to come out into the streets and public places, for mistrust and suspicion oppress them,

- 3.) When the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding,
but when they perish, the righteous thrive. 28:28

b.. For influential esteem

Righteousness exalts a nation,

but sin is a condemnation to peoples. (14:34).

From its posture of serving others, not self, the esteemed nation provides political and moral leadership, and derives from its prestige the benefits of power, peace and prosperity.

“Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” (Deut 4:6)

Ultimately a nation’s exaltation depends on its piety and ethics, not on its political, military, and /or economic greatness. In its external affairs a sinful nation among other things breaks treaties, propagandizes lies and bullies weaker nation.

c. for prosperity

- 1.) By me [Woman Wisdom] kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just;
by me princes govern, and nobles--all who rule on earth.
I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.
With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity.
My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.
I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,
bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full. 8:15—21

- 2.) The unplowed field of poor people yields plenty of food,
but injustice sweeps it away. (13:23)

“The problem of the poor in Proverbs is not God’s creation but injustice.”

- 3.) A roaring lion and a ravenous, charging bear
is a wicked ruler over a poor people. 28:15

“No sentiment of pity softens his bosom. No principle of justice regulates his conduct” (Paxton, cited by Bridges).

- 4.) A destitute man and one who oppresses the poor—
a rain that washes away and there is no food. 28:3

“man”: Heb. *geber*: “strong man,” capable of producing a crop

“and”: joins the destitute strong man with the tyrant who oppresses the poor.

“who oppresses the poor”: the tyrant is stronger than the strong man, for he takes away the latter’s produce--probably through a corrupt judges and brutal police.

“a rain that washes away”: A metaphor for the “one who oppresses the poor.” Normally rain promotes a crop’s growth but a driving rain sweeps away both the crop and the soil. The oppressive ruler betrayed his role, inflicting ruin and squalor upon the citizens he should have enabled to produce splendor.

“there is no food”: connected with a strong man who without oppression could have produced food for himself and others.

- 5.) By justice a king gives a country stability,
but whoever is exacts “contributions” or gives them tears it down.

(Pro 29:4)

“contributions”: a cultic term, a metaphor for bribes, extortion, blackmail and all other forms of ill-gotten gain. The metaphor connotes that the one

exacts bribes makes himself a god; and the one who gives them makes himself the worshiper of the blasphemer.

2. Thoughtful quotes

Christopher Stone [Harvard Scholar, head of Open Society Foundation]:

“In terms of social and economic development, high levels of crime and violence threaten to undermine the best-laid plans to reduce poverty, improve governance, and relieve human misery.”

Gary Haugen [head of International Justice Ministries]: “The truth is, very high rates of common criminal violence can have the same devastating impact on economic development as a civil war, economic shocks, or the worst natural disasters.” Criminal violence in Guatemala cost an estimated US 2.4 billion, or 7.3 percent of GDP, *more than twice* the damage of Hurricane Stan that year. Crime and Violence reduced economic growth 25 percent in El Salvador, 25 percent in Columbia, or 11 percent in Brazil” (*Locust Effect*, p. 101)

Molly Ivins: “Naturally, when it comes to voting, we in Texas are accustomed to discerning that fine hair's-breadth worth of difference that makes one hopeless dipstick slightly less awful than the other. But it does raise the question: Why bother? Oh, it's just that your life is at stake.”

Charles de Gaulle: I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.

B. For the good of the governing: retains power

1. Proverbs

a. Kindness and reliability guard the king;

He upholds his throne with kindness 20:28).

b. These also are sayings of the wise:

To show partiality in giving a verdict is not good:

Whoever says to the guilty, "You are innocent," will be cursed by peoples and and nations will strike him with a curse.

But it will go well with those who convict the guilty,

On them will come a blessing that brings good (Pro 24:23-25)

“Not good is expanded into people curse” and that contrasted with their pronouncing a blessing.

- c. A leader who is lacking in understanding multiplies extortions;
But he who hates unjust gain prolongs his days (28:16).

“lacks sense”: i.e., cannot survive

- d. The king judges the poor through truth,
His throne is established forever (29:14).

Refers to a king who establishes the disturbed harmony of his realm by punishing the oppressive rich and delivering the powerless and oppressed poor through reliable witnesses and reliable data.

- e. A large population is a king's glory,
but without subjects a prince is ruined. (14:28)

“The proverb implicitly encourages the disciple to be competent person to whom people devote themselves, not a fool, whom they desert.” See below for characteristics of a competent king.

- f. Be sure you know the condition of your flocks,
give careful attention to your herds;
for riches do not endure forever,
and a crown is not secure for all generations.
When the hay is removed and new growth appears
and the grass from the hills is gathered in,
the lambs will provide you with clothing,
and the goats with the price of a field.
You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed your family
and to nourish your female servants. (27:23-27)

The proverb, addressing the son as an owner of flocks and probably as a ruler, admonishes him to concern himself intimately and personally with the well-being of his wards.

2. John Quincy Adams: “When those who govern are righteous, their administration will be successful and stable.”

III. Foundations of Good Government:

A. Bible:

1. Mosaic Law:

a. Supreme Court: Priest and judge:

If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge--whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults--take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do. Act according to whatever they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left. Anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. (Deut 17:8-12)

b. King copies law upon his inauguration to the throne.

When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees²⁰ and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

Put the Ten Commandments back in school

c. David's command to descendants

“If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel” (1 Kings. 2:1-4).

d. Book of Law has had greater impact for social good than any other book.

“Deuteronomy has had greater consequences for human history than any other single book... the regulations of the LORD's covenants are the first to establish universal education and health for all members of a nations and fixes the only welfare system that was in existence in ancient times” (*AOTT*, p. 479)

2. Sages' wisdom

a. Greater definition in social and cultural issues than Book of the Law. Love God and neighbor > Ten commandments > Proverbs

Do not murder	>	Feed enemy
Do not commit adultery	>	honor wife
Do not steal	>	feed poor
Do not bear false witness	>	covers all transgressions

Broken Window Theory: James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, *Broken Windows* *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982).

"Consider a building with a few broken windows. If the windows are not repaired, the tendency is for vandals to break a few more windows. Eventually, they may even break into the building, and if it's unoccupied, perhaps become squatters or light fires inside."

"Or consider a sidewalk. Some litter accumulates. Soon, more litter accumulates. Eventually, people even start leaving bags of trash from take-out restaurants there or breaking into cars.

"A successful strategy for preventing vandalism, say the theory's authors, is to fix the problems when they are small. Repair the broken windows within a short time, say, a day or a week, and the tendency is that vandals are much less likely to break more windows or do further damage. Clean up the sidewalk every day, and the tendency is for litter not to accumulate (or for the rate of littering to be much less). Problems do not escalate and thus respectable residents do not flee a neighborhood."

"When Mayor Rudolph Giuliani applied the broken window theory to New York City, he significantly reduced crime in that great metropolis. So likewise when youth learn to feed their enemies, to honor those to whom honor is due, to be generous to the poor and to protect another's reputations, the larger matters, such as those of the Ten Commandments, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal and not to bear false witness will become a reality and society will become a place where people love one another as themselves. That sort of culture establishes the City of God and LORD's blessings crown it."

b. Wisdom literature in ANE:

Viziers address their sons with the special purpose of preparing the young men to succeed them in their offices or high positions among the ranks of court-officials.

c. Original court context of proverbs shows through in:

- 1) Collection 1 (e.g. 8:12—21)

- ¹⁵ By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just;
¹⁶ by me princes govern, and nobles--all who rule on earth.

2) Collection II (B: cf. 16:10—15)

¹⁰ The lips of a king speak as an oracle, and his mouth does not betray justice.

¹⁵ When a king's face brightens, it means life; his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.

Every verse, apart from v. 11, mentions “the king”

3) Collection III (23:1—3)

When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you (23:1),

4) Collection V:

a. “Court Hierarchy and the Conflict of the Righteous and the Wicked (25:2—27)

b. “Caring for ‘flocks’ and ‘herds’” (27:24—27)

c. “Relationship of Torah as a Measure for Ruling and Gaining Wealth” (28:1—11).

d. “Importance of One’s Relationship with God for Ruling and Gaining Wealth”(28:12—27)

e. “Rearing and Ruling Proved Worthwhile in Dealing with the Poor” (29:2—15).

5.) Collection VII. “The sayings of King Lemuel--an inspired utterance his mother taught him” (31:1)

3. Necessity of Christianity for Democracy. Graebner, “Christianity and Democracy.”

a. Dangers to democracy:

- 1) Selfish individualism: always on move in search of a better life. This destroys community. Visitors in their own town
- 2) Consumerism: a passion for more comfort and ease. So desires become insatiable
- 3) Conformity: individualism but no certainty about absolutes. Unlimited confidence in judgment of majority.
- 4) Disregard for the past and future
- 5) Ultimately the establishment of a despotic nanny state.

b. Salvation from dangers:

Christianity, a powerful force in American life. “[Religion in America] is an established and irresistible fact which no one undertakes to attack or defend.” “There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility and its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth.”

- 1) concern for community
- 2) better values than materialism
- 3) conscience over conformity
- 4) concern for past and future
- 5) Care for poor, not self

4. Necessity for belief in afterlife, for a psychology of ultimate responsibility. Megan Glavin [Master’s degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Portland State University], “Mass Shooting and the Afterlife,” *Seattle Times*, July 18 (2014).

- a. Problem: Shootings in high-school, college campuses, public places and in the home.

- b. Inadequate solutions: mental-health issues, prevalence of violence in American entertainment, and gun-control issues. “Americans expected science, psychology, counseling, a sophisticated intellect to replace ultimate accountability as a control of evil. It has not.”
- c. Change psychology a collective belief in ultimate accountability. “Ultimate accountability asserts that it does not matter if the evil a person does on Earth is never seen nor detected, and it does not matter if one commits suicide after committing evil. There is still judgment of some kind, and consequences to face in eternity.” “Many American do not believe in an afterlife and divine judgment. Thus homicide is attractive for revenge, gaining attention, escaping the misery of life and the expression of emotional pain, and suicide is attractive for escape.”

B. Conscience

A mortal who is laden with the guilt of human blood
Will flee to the pit. Let no one support him. (28:17).

Martin Luther King Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches*
“There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.”

IV. Characteristics of a Good Ruler

A. Inseparable from character of the person: to be wise/righteous oneself.

1. Proverbs

Book’s teachings on politics within framework of the Preamble

Evil men do not discern what is right,
but the one who seeks the Lord discerns everything (28:5).

2. Thoughtful quotes

Confucius: To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.

Harriet Lerner [best known for her work on marriage and family relationships and the psychology of women]: Although the connections are not always obvious, personal change is inseparable from social and political change.

B. Righteous: seeks the best for others, not self.

1. Proverbs: righteous

An abomination to kings is doing wickedness,
Because a throne is established through righteousness (16:12)

2. Thoughtful quotes

Thomas Jefferson: A politician looks forward only to the next election. A statesman looks forward to the next generation. [American President]

Margaret Chase Smith [American politician. A member of the Republican Party, she served as a U.S Representative and a U.S. Senator from Maine]: My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration, that constructive criticism is not only to be expected but sought, that smears are not only to be expected but fought, that honor is to be earned, not bought.

Vaclav Havel [the Czech writer and dissident whose eloquent dissections of Communist rule helped to destroy it in revolutions that brought down the Berlin Wall and swept Mr. Havel himself into power]:

“Genuine politics -- the only politics I am willing to devote myself to -- is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole.”

C. Stand for principles, not for parties

1. Proverb

Introduction: Inseparable from being righteous:

- a. The righteous knows court decisions for the poor,
but the wicked does not understand knowing [them] (29:7)
- b. One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth
and one who gives gifts to the rich--both come to poverty. (22:16)
- c. Like a muddied spring or a polluted well
are the righteous who give way to the wicked. (25:26)

2. Thoughtful quotes:

Richard Armour [American poet and author who wrote over sixty-five books].

“Politics, it seems to me, for years, or all too long, has been concerned with right or left instead of right or wrong.”

Alexis de Tocqueville. “There are many men of principle in both parties in America, but there is no party of principle.”

John F. Kennedy. “Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.”

John Quincy Adams. “Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.”

Carl Schurz [A German revolutionary, American statesman and reformer, U.S. Minister to Spain, Union Army General in the American Civil War, U. S. Senator, and Secretary of the Interior.] “The peace and welfare of this and coming generations of Americans will be secure only as we cling to the watchword of true patriotism: "Our country -- when right to be kept right; when wrong to be put right."

Mahatma Gandhi: “Seven Deadly Sins”

“Wealth without work

Pleasure without conscience

Science without humanity

Knowledge without character

Politics without principle

Commerce without morality

Worship without sacrifice.”

Vaclav Havel [Czech playwright, essayist, poet, philosopher, dissident and statesman. He was the first democratically elected president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic after the Czech-Slovak split]: “Genuine politics -- even politics worthy of the name -- the only politics I am willing to devote myself to -- is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole.”

D. By justice, equity

1. Proverbs (justice especially for the poor and powerless [cf. Naboth’s vineyard])

a. Does justice:

- 1.) Doing what is right and just and fair (1:3).
- 2.) Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent
Both, yes both, are an abomination to the LORD (17:15)

The proverb corrects the popular misconception that it is better to set free ten guilty persons than to condemn one innocent person. Both situations are an abomination to the LORD.

- 3.) If even imposing a fine on the innocent is not good,
How much more flogging nobles is against what it right. (17:26)

“Not good”: imposes tyranny as the coin of the realm.

“Nobles”: honest officials

“flogging”: more painful than a financial penalty

- 4.) It is not good to be partial to the wicked
and so deprive the innocent of justice. 18:5

b. Cannot be bribed

- 1.) Many seek the favor of a nobleman,
and the generous person has everyone for a companion. 19:6

“seek the favor>’ Lit “make the face pleasant.” Refers to the introductory act of a ceremony defining the fundamental relationship that commonly issues in a petition. The subject performing the action declares a subordinate position to the one whose favor is sought: here of a litigant to a nobleman. The introductory act probably included the giving a gift or gifts to incline the official to bestow the soon-to-be-asked-for benefaction.

“Generous person” is in a position to attach to his person or cause the beneficiary through his munificence. The gift is in danger of becoming a bribe. The connection with vv. 5 and 7 suggests that justice on behalf of the poor is not being well served:

⁵ A false witness will not go unpunished,
and whoever pours out lies will not go free.

⁶ Many curry favor with a ruler,
and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.

⁷ The poor are shunned by all their relatives—
 how much more do their friends avoid them!
 Though the poor pursue them with pleading,
 they are nowhere to be found.

2.) The wicked accept bribes in secret to pervert the course of justice. (Pro 17:23)

c. Defends the poor

1.) Do not exploit the poor because they are poor
 and do not crush the needy in court,
 for the LORD will take up their case
 and will exact life for life. (Pro 22:22-23)

2.) These also are sayings of the wise.
 To show partiality in judgment is not good.
 He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,”
 Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;
 But to those who rebuke the wicked will be delight,
 And good blessing will come upon them. (24:23-25)

3.) It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
 It is not for kings to drink wine,
 Or for rulers to desire strong drink.
 Lest they drink and forget what is decreed,
 And pervert the rights of all the afflicted (31:4-5).
 Open your mouth for the dumb,
 For the rights of all the unfortunate.
 Open your mouth, judge righteously,
 And defend the rights of the afflicted and needy (31:8-9).

2. Thoughtful quotes

John Wolcott [an English satirist, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Peter Pindar"].

“Midas, they say, possessed the art of old
 Of turning whatsoe'er he touch'd to gold;

This modern statesmen can reverse with ease —
Touch *them* with gold, *they'll turn to what you please.*”

John Gardner [Secretary of Health and Human Services Under Lyndon Johnson]: “When one may pay out over two million dollars to presidential and Congressional campaigns, the U.S. government is virtually up for sale.”

Aesop: “We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.”

Lord Acton: “The one pervading evil of democracy is the tyranny of the party that succeeds, by force or fraud, in carrying elections.”

Caroline Baum [Journalist writing about macro-economy & intersection between politics and economics. Her specialty is exposing economic nonsense.] “Members of Congress should be compelled to wear uniforms like NASCAR drivers, so we could identify their corporate sponsors.”

Mark Twain: “Wherefore being all of one mind, we do highly resolve that government of the grafted by the grafter for the grafter shall not perish from the earth.”

“No public interest is anything other or nobler than a massed accumulation of private interests.”

Jimmy Carter: “The sad duty of politics is to establish justice in a sinful world.”

E. Reliably kind and gracious

Kindness and reliability guard the king;
He upholds his throne with kindness. 20:28.

“These virtues to a helpless covenant partner are personified”

F. Surrounds himself with good advisers

1. For lack of guidance [תְּהִיבְלוֹת] a people falls,
but safety lies in many advisers. (Pro 11:14)

“safety”: bringing help to those in trouble rather than rescuing them from it.

“advisers/counselors” is always plural. Their arguments and counter-arguments ensure that their agreed-upon plan will not miscarry but succeed in spite of danger.

2. Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers each one succeeds. (15:22)

“Necessary because of self-deception: All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD” (16:2).

G. Disassociates himself from the wicked

1. The righteous searches out his confidential friend,
but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Pro 12:26)

“way of the wicked”: pride, selfishness and incorrigibility blind them to reality.

2. A king is one who sits on the throne of justice
Winnowing all evil with his eyes (20:8).

“His sharp discerning eye perceives all that is morally corrupt and socially disruptive to the well-being of God’s kingdom, and his binding decisions are so effective that not a trace of evil is left to take root again.”

3. The wise king winnows the wicked,
And brings back the cartwheel over them. 20:26

4. Remove the dross from the silver,
and a vessel comes forth for silversmith;
remove a wicked official from the king's presence,
and his throne will be established through righteousness. (Pro 25:4-5)

“dross” = “wicked official”

“vessel” = an established throne

“comes forth” : an immediate connection between the process of refining metal in a cupel and casting of the refined metal into a mold = the same certain connection between the process of reforming an administration and producing an established throne.

“silversmith”= the king

“vessel” = “his throne will be established.”

H. Seeks the truth

1. Proverbs

- a. Kings take pleasure in honest lips;
they value the one who speaks what is right. 16:13

⁷What you have seen with your eyes
do not bring hastily to trial (*rib*).

⁸Lest what will you do in the end
when your peer puts you to shame?

⁹Plead your case (*rib*) with your peer,
But do not divulge a confidence.

¹⁰Lest an arbiter will pronounce you guilty,
And the accusation against you will never depart. (25:7-10)

Proverb pairs are closely related by:

- 1.) Court Setting: *Rib*: “Trial,” “case” (vv. 7, 9) between “peers” (v. 8, 9).
“Arbiter”: the judge hearing the case.
- 2.) Imperatives: “do not bring hastily to trial” and “do not divulge a confidence”

Do no jump to conclusion from what you have seen or breach a confidence you have heart.

- 3.) Motive: “lest” (negative consequences): loss of career through shaming (vv. 8 and 10).
- 4.) Permanent shame: “in the end,” “will never depart.”

The second proverb balances the first. The first warns against impetuous litigation. The second assumes conflicts have be resolved, but it must be done in the right way: by a well prepared case without divulging a confidence.

- b. If a ruler pays attention to falsehood,
All his attendants become wicked (29:12).

“pays attention”: through indifference to truth and/or cynicism about God and humans.

Qualis rex, talis grex (“like king, like people).

- c. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter (25:2).

Cf. hate e-mails and Snopes . Christians write protests by the millions concerning matters that are factually erroneous.

2. Thoughtful quotes

Edward T. Cheyfitz [author of *Constructive Collective Bargaining*]: “Nobody believes a rumor here in Washington until it's officially denied.”

George Orwell: “In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.”

Kurt Krauthammer: “Every two years the American politics industry fills the airwaves with the most virulent, scurrilous, wall-to-wall character assassination of nearly every political practitioner in the country — and then declares itself puzzled that America has lost trust in its politicians.”

I. Exposes and punishes wicked

1. A ruler's obligation

a. Proverbs

- 1.) A wise king winnows out the wicked;
he drives the threshing wheel over them. (Pro 20:26; cf. 20:8)
- 2.) A mortal who is laden with the guilt of human blood
Will flee to the pit. Let no one support him (28:17).

“flee”: As his conscience drove him to flee phantom enemies (v. 1), it now drives him to flee to the entrance of the grave, where he hopes to escape his inward torment.

“no one support him”: do not interfere with divinely established *lex talionis*

b. Thoughtful quote

Blaise Pascal: “Justice without force is powerless; force without justice is tyrannical.”

2. Beneficial to Society

- a. A hothead is one who incurs a penalty;

Surely, if you rescue him, you will have to do it again. (19:19)

“hothead”: a person characterized by heated excitement of resentment against a perceived offender, not by love for him (19:11), making his behavior irrational

“penalty”: must be corrected by experiencing the penalties from the foibles of his ways.

- b. Flog a mocker, and the uncommitted will become prudent;

And if one corrects the insightful, he discerns knowledge. (19:25)

“Flogging” is penal to the mocker, remedial to the uncommitted. Merely a word corrects the discerning person

- c. By fining a mocker, the uncommitted becomes wise,

And by paying attention to the wise he gains knowledge. (Pro 21:11)

3. Tempered by mercy

Whoever conceals his sins does not prosper,

but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Pro 28:13)

“renounces”. Lit. “abandons”

David sinned egregiously but was forgiven.

J. Sober

It is not for kings, Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine,

Nor for rulers to crave intoxicants;

Lest he drink and forget what is decreed,

And lest he change a verdict for every oppressed person. 31:4—5

“Instead of forgetting the oppressed, the king must speak up for them.”

V. How to have political influence

A. Be wise

1. The king's favor is toward a prudent servant who acts wisely,
But his fury ruins a shameful [servant]. (14:35).

The proverb motivates the servant to act wisely, not shamefully, by promising him the king's favor, not his wrath for appropriate behavior. The proverb also admonishes the king to promote competence, loyalty and efficiency in ventures and not to tolerate mismanagement incompetence .

2. A king's wrath is a messenger of death,
but the wise will appease it.
When a king's face brightens, it means life;
his favor is like a rain cloud in spring.(16:14—15)

“wrath...death.” The LORD upholds ultimate justice; the king upholds immediate justice.

“appease it’: by confessing and abandoning wrong doing (28:13). This entails humility (15:33), repentance (1:23), love and fidelity (16:6; 3:3) and patience in giving gentle answers (15:1). Abigail appeased David (1 Samuel 25); David appeased the LORD (Psalm 51); Esther appeased Xerxes (Esther 7:2—4);

B. Be gracious

As for the one who loves a pure heart,
whose lips are gracious, the king is his friend (22:11).

“loves”: zealous desire and quest for something

“Pure”: free of any contaminating, extraneous matter, which is different from something's essential nature. In Proverbs it refers to that which is ethically pure according to the LORD's morals.

“heart”: precedes lips to protect elegant speech from being a mere façade.

“gracious”: free of lies and distortion.

“friend”: will have a career in the palace

C. Be patient

By patience a ruler is persuaded,
And a soft tongue shatters the bone. (25:15)

Inward “patience” finds expression in a gentle tongue

“ruler”: highest member of the body politic

“soft tongue”: soothes and comforts the listener’s heart

“soft...shatters.” An oxymoron

“bone”: hardest member of the body. Virtues of patience and gentleness break down the deepest, most hardened resistance to an idea a person possesses.

Newt Gingrich: Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.

D. Be humble

Do not claim honor in the presence of the king,
And do not stand in the place of great men;
For it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,”
Than that one humiliate you before a noble (25:6-7).

“The proverb pair cautions the courtier not to cross over on his own initiative into the higher social rank and dignity of the king and his nobles. It is better that superiors elevate him because his aptitude warrants it than that he outreach his limits and rise a reprimand and loss of face that will damage his career prospects (cf. Lk 14:8—11).”

E. Be temperate

When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
Consider carefully what is before you;
And put a knife to your throat,
If you are a glutton
Do not crave his delicacies,
For it is deceptive food (23:1-3).

“The ruler’s invitation to dine with him presents an unusual opportunity for success or failure, for his host can influence his career for good or ill. The ruler (*moshel*) ... will take note of the glutton, detest him, and wreck his career. Dining with a ruler is the moment to display the “well-proportioned behaviour and self-control” of a

model statesman (McKane)... The stakes are high—so much so that, if the subordinate knows he has trouble restraining his appetite, he should abstain altogether.”

F. Be proficient

Do you see a person who is skillful in his commission?

He will present himself before kings;

He will not present himself before obscure people (22:29).

Daniel and his three Hebrew companions were very influential in government, even though they were young and political prisoners. They were chosen to hold positions of power because they were skillful and wise (Dan. 1:17, 19-20). Likewise, Pharaoh chose Joseph to be second in command in spite of the fact that he was a Hebrew, for whom the Egyptians had little regard (Gen. 43:32; 46:34), because he manifested greater wisdom than any other man in Egypt (Gen. 41:39).

G. Fear the LORD and the king

Fear the LORD, my son, and the king, my son,
 With intriguing officials do not get involved,
 for those two will send sudden destruction on them,
 and who knows what ruin the two of them can inflict? (24:21-22)

“The identification of the king with the LORD shows that the sage regarded the king’s throne on earth as the legitimate representation of God’s throne in heaven (cf. Matt 17:24—27; 22:21; Rom 13:1—5; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13—17),

“The admonitions imply that the way to advance yourself and not to threaten your career is to revere legitimate authority and avoid becoming involved in plots to undermine them and seize power for oneself.”

Conclusion: Live by faith in the LORD

Hopes placed in mortals die with them;
 all the promise of their power comes to nothing. (11:7)

Commit to the LORD whatever you do,
 and he will establish your plans. (16:3)

In the LORD's hand the king's heart is a stream of water
that he channels toward all who please him. (21:1)

The Righteous One takes note of the household of the wicked
and brings the wicked to ruin. (21:12)

There is no wisdom, no insight,
And no counsel that can succeed against the LORD.
The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but victory rests with the LORD. (21:30-31)

Many seek an audience with a ruler,
but it is from the LORD that one gets justice. (29:26)