

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**September 25, 2011**

**Wisdom and Discernment**

**Proverbs 25:1-10**

**Key verse: “Argue your case with your neighbor directly, and do not disclose another’s secret” (Proverbs 25:9).**

This section of Proverbs requires some sifting through its cultural context in order to uncover the timeless truths for our lives. But God’s timeless principles are here, and they speak to anyone called to exercise authority and leadership or to anyone who relates to leaders and those in authority.

In their immediate context, these verses refer primarily to the “king.” But these truths speak to issues of leadership and authority in the family, in the church, in the workplace, as well as in government....

1. Verse 2 speaks to anyone in leadership/authority about the importance of leading diligently, wisely, and well. God gets glory, says the writer of Proverbs, because God’s ways are higher than our human ability to fully understand. However, a good leader is called to lead wisely and serve diligently, always searching for wisdom and understanding in order to lead justly. Leadership—in the family, the church, the workplace, or the government—is a trust from God. And the good leader will “search things out” in order to be the best leader possible.

2. Verses 4 and 5 remind us that people of high moral character must be placed in leadership if that leadership is to succeed. So often, we choose leaders and build leadership teams based solely on gifts, abilities, and personal charisma. These verses remind us that character qualities—such as honesty, integrity, and loyalty—are equally if not more important. “Take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness” (v. 5). When it comes to good leadership, moral character matters.

3. Verses 6 and 7 illustrate the importance of exercising humility as one relates to authority. The specific illustration is probably a feast in the royal court. At such an event, one would be wiser to humbly take a seat at a back table than to proudly seek a place upfront. “For it is better to be told, ‘Come up here,’ than to be put lower in the presence of a noble” (v. 7).

In our lives today, there is nothing wrong with “putting our best foot forward” or letting an employer know what we are doing to help the company. But it is still true

that pride and selfishness are not pleasing to God. “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18).

**4. Verses 8-10 speak to the importance of a good name and reputation.** The specific illustration concerns the handling of personal disputes. But these verses remind us that a good name, a good reputation, is invaluable (v. 10).

Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald tells a story about an experience he had when he was a young Methodist minister. While he was traveling down a remote country road one night, he ran out of gas. This was before the age of cell phones, so he locked his car and walked back to a little gas station he remembered passing. The store owner was about to close for the night. But he agreed to put some gas in a can so that Ernest could take it to his car and then drive to the station to fill up.

As the store owner was filling the gas can, Ernest looked in his wallet for some cash. To his dismay, he realized he had no way to pay for any gas. Ernest told the man that he was a Methodist preacher and, if he could get enough gas to get home he would return the next day and pay for it. The store owner answered: “I’ve heard every story there is to be told. No money, no gas.”

Ernest could think of nothing else he could do except return to his car and hope that someone might stop to help him. As Ernest turned to leave, the store owner asked: “What did you say your name is?”

“I am Ernest Fitzgerald,” he answered.

“Did you ever know Mr. Jim Fitzgerald?” asked the store owner.

“Jim Fitzgerald was my father,” Ernest replied.

“Well if that’s the case,” said the store owner, “take the gas can, put the gas in your car and come back and fill up. The next time you are passing this way, you can stop and pay me.”

With great relief, Ernest took the gas to his car, poured it into the gas tank, then drove back to the gas station where he filled up his car. As he was driving home with a full tank of gas, Ernest thought to himself, “I have just bought gas on the good name of my father who has been dead for ten years! How can I ever thank him?”

A good name, a good reputation, is invaluable! What you do to establish a reputation of integrity and honor in your life will bless your children and grandchildren when you are dead and gone.

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