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In 1945, Operation Bernard, a project of the Nazi government, was abandoned as Russian troops began to press in on Berlin. In a last-ditch effort to conceal their attempts to win at any cost, German troops took wooden crates over the mountains and dropped them in a remote lake in Austria. There, at the bottom of Lake Toplitz, a deep, isolated, small lake, hundreds of crates were dropped to conceal their plans.

In 1999, a team of explorers lead by CBS's 90 minutes went to discover if they could find these crates to learn what was inside. In an amazing discovery, the crates were found, and when opened, what the explorers found was shocking. What the Germans had concealed was 2.5 billion pounds worth of British notes. What the Germans had planned to do was release the counterfeit currency to destabilize the British economy, causing a loss of confidence by Brits in their currency. It was never discovered why the money was not released, but the notes had been perfected and would have caused mass confusion and ruined the British economy while changing the course of WW2.

It would have taken great discernment to sort out which bills were false and which ones were true. And it takes skill, study, time, effort, and great discipline to keep counterfeit money out of an economy. Protecting a country's currency is essential to a country's stability. The discipline governments have is for their well-being, their vitality as a nation, and their people's confidence.

In the same way, the wise person will discipline themselves to discern, because wisdom comes through a life that grows in discipline. Like a government protects its economy, so the wise person protects their soul. Proverbs 13 and 14 help us to consider how we should discipline and discern for our good. So what ways does it encourage us?

1. Discipline your Desires (Prov. 13)

The act of discipline is both positive and negative. Discipline is intended to reinforce positive actions and correct negative actions. While we won't look at Proverbs 15 as it repeats many of the themes of chapter 10 on how we speak, the principles throughout these chapters are to discipline and discern so that we would know the good life. And chapter 13 uses the word "instruction" or "discipline" – the same Hebrew word – in vv. 1, 18, and 24, suggesting that this chapter wants us to discipline ourselves for the righteous life. What areas does Proverbs commend us in discipline?

This chapter could be broken down into 5 parts, all pointing us to the middle section:

A – Discipline and Cravings (vv. 1-6)

B – Riches (vv. 7-11)

C – Desires Fulfilled

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B' – Property and Inheritance

A' – Discipline and Cravings

And that structure suggests that what this chapter is pointing to is how we fulfill our desires. So let's consider how this chapter wants us to receive instruction and discipline so our desires are aligned with the good life.

Cravings (vv. 1-6, 24-25)

First, disciplining ourselves for the purpose of godliness includes our cravings. The instruction the son is to receive here is to avoid being a scoffer – someone who refuses to listen to others and mocks their direction, and in the end they give in to their cravings and desires, and what it leads them into is ruin and destruction.

Cravings and desires are not bad things, but without control, they lead to ruin and violence. The idea of guarding the mouth and lips here has less to do with words but more to do with desires and how one deals with them.

It's important in a fast-food culture where access to anything you want at such a low cost that we have to discipline ourselves. The righteous may have their appetite satisfied (v. 25), but it is because they have learned not to overindulge.

We live in a culture that says that desires should be fulfilled, and that if you feel something, you should have it. But the proverbs here make it clear that if we indulge our cravings without discipline, it will lead us to ruin.

We know that we can't deny desires – and I've already quoted Tina Turner before: "Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?" as though we can just deny our desires and we will be fine. But God has made us to desire, and the language of desire, life, crave, and soul all all connected in these verses as they are one Hebrew word – the word for craving. This is why we need to instruct or discipline our cravings. Cravings that are steered are godly, good, and controlled. Self-control is a fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22), and the result of self-control is a life that is not mastered but masters and learns to submit God's good gifts to God's good ways.

Riches (vv. 7-11; 20-23)

A second craving that has to be mastered is the sense of wealth. It is tempting to want, and the warning of pretending to be rich, but acquiring wealth properly, by preserving justice, and acting in godly ways. Getting money quickly, we are told in v. 11, is dangerous. Rather, the hard work, the discipline, the act of justly earning money is what leaves an inheritance for future

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generations. Notice how the word good is used in vv. 21-22? What is commended is how it is good to earn money over time, to work hard, and to pass it on.

Story after story can be told of people winning the lottery. They gain a great amount of wealth suddenly, but because they have not been disciplined and prepared for great wealth, they blow these resources foolishly. The vast majority of lottery winners do not live the dream that Lotto 6-49 portrays. Statistics show that they end up in ruin.

Professional sports teams have realized this danger with their young athletes. Receiving multi-million dollar contracts can ruin a young athlete, so they provide them with discipline to manage their wealth. Knowing that their careers won't last long, discipline is needed on and off the playing field.

In the same way, the discipline of managing our money shows that we have mastered our money rather than money mastering us. Wealth is not the end all and be all; it is necessary for us to walk in the way of the wise.

Fulfilling Desire (vv. 12-19)

And at the center of this passage is bracketed by vv. 12 and 19 – desire fulfilled. How do we fulfill our desires? Is it by grasping? Is it by taking by force or by evil? No, Proverbs says that it is by listening to instruction and receiving correction (v. 18). It is waiting patiently, knowing that when you follow and revere God's commandment, life comes to you.

In vv. 12 and 14 we hear about the tree of life and the fountain of life. And this takes us back to Eden. We are reminded of how Adam was to come to seek wisdom from God, and this tree was located in a well-watered spot. By seeking God's commands and God's ways, Adam was promised life, fulfillment, and joy.

But our society tells us that the way we fulfill desire is by acting on it. Don't wait. Seize the moment. But Proverbs says that the way that desire is fulfilled is not by being impulsive, but by revering the commandments of God, turning from evil, acting with knowledge, and heeding wisdom. As we learn to address our cravings, we learn the wisdom of being self-controlled, mastered by godliness.

2. Learn to Discern People (Prov. 14)

Since Proverbs is written to help prepare a future kingship and leaders, not only are desires to be discerned and mastered, but Proverbs 14 commends discerning different kinds of people. There are the wise and the fools, there are faithful and true and there are liars and scoffers. We

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know how important it is to discern good character and the types of people – this is necessary for being the kind of person who can lead well.

Solomon's own life bears this out. As the author of most of the Proverbs, Solomon's first act after receiving wisdom from the Lord in 1 Kings 3 was sorting out the difference between what was right and false. I have shared the story before – two women had babies, and one rolled over and crushed her child in the night. Discovering her baby was dead, she switched children. In the morning, when the other mother awoke to find the child next to her dead, she was shocked. It was not her child, but they needed the king to mediate. So bringing the case to Solomon, he discerned that he could not decide because it was one woman's word against the other. So he created a scenario where he would divide the living child into two. The real mother, desperate for her child's life, was willing to give up her rights to the baby to protect its life. The other mother, vengeful and angry, was willing to see this other child die.

That is discernment. Knowing how to discern people. Over and over in this chapter, we are told about different kinds of people.

Discern people by the fear of the Lord (14:2, 26, 27)

Notice how Solomon commends discerning people? By the fear of the Lord. Those who walk in uprightness are described as being confident and turn away from death. By knowing what people are like, knowing the wise and the fool, knowing the truth teller and the liar, knowing the understanding and the scoffer – it enables you to live a life of discernment that protects you and others from harm.

And the way to know people is to know the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. The fear of the Lord means you learn his ways. You love his ways. You discern good and evil because the more you know the good, you can spot the bad.

One of my favourite movies is "Catch Me If you Can." In it, Leonardo DiCaprio plays a teenager who pretends to be a lawyer, a doctor, and an airline pilot. Leaving home after his parents' marriage falls apart, the young Frank discovers that he can get money by counterfeiting cheques. As he moves around the globe and evades authorities, he is eventually caught. But what makes this story amazing is that the young Frank is reformed and begins to assist federal authorities in counterfeit cheque situations. He knows the real cheque so well he can tell just by the feel of a cheque if it is real or not.

In the same way, what Proverbs commends to us is to know the Lord. Knowing the good, the true, the beautiful will enable us to spot the fake, the phoney, the false. And when we know that, it will lead us into the good life.

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Discern good rulers (14:28-35)

The reason for this discernment is that this book was written for future leaders of the nation. A king and the future political elite needs to know how to discern – so that just laws can be put into place, to give refuge to the people. What builds up a nation is righteousness (v. 34), but sin will undermine economies, the stability of society, and destroy a nation. Israel was a great example of this. As they chased after other gods, as they pursued alliances with foreign nations, they discovered that they turned away from the Lord and chased after the counterfeit. And in so doing, they ruined themselves.

But when Israel turned to the Lord, what they found was his strength was able to preserve them. And looking back on Solomon’s life is intended to prepare us to see that while he started well, he ruined himself and the nation in the long term because his sin and love of foreign women and other gods brought down the kingdom in time.

However, we can avoid this folly when we...

3. See the wisdom of Christ

The way of Christ is not the way of indulgence, but of giving of himself. And he offers himself to us in the Lord’s Supper as a reminder that we can find that our souls are satisfied in him alone. We are not satisfied by consuming, which is what our culture tells us – Have more! No, we are satisfied when we come to Christ and he feeds us, the one who said, “Not my will, but yours be done” (Lk. 22:42).

And as we submit to his ways, what we discover is that Jesus can lead us and guide us. From his earthly ministry to this very day, he knows what is in men’s hearts (Jn 2:24-25). If he, the Creator of all, can give himself up to die to make a nation of people who are self-sacrificing by knowing what is in men’s hearts, then shouldn’t we entrust ourselves to him?