

“Wisdom for One-Anothering, Part 6: Influence”

Revelation 5:5, 8-12

Proverbs (see below)

Selections from Proverbs on Influence

Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin condemns any people.

A king delights in a wise servant,
but a shameful servant arouses his fury. (14: 34-35)

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

When a king's face brightens, it means life;
his favor is like a rain cloud in spring. (16:12,15)

A king's rage is like the roar of a lion,
but his favor is like dew on the grass. (19:12)

The righteous lead blameless lives;
blessed are their children after them.

When a king sits on his throne to judge,
he winnows out all evil with his eyes. (20:7-8)

Love and faithfulness keep a king safe;
through love his throne is made secure. (20:28)

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

One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace
will have the king for a friend. (22:11)

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

A ruler who oppresses the poor
is like a driving rain that leaves no crops. (28:3)

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Revelation 5:5, 8-12

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The rich are wise in their own eyes;

one who is poor and discerning sees how deluded they are.

When the righteous triumph, there is great elation;

but when the wicked rise to power, people go into hiding. (28:11-12)

If a king judges the poor with fairness,

his throne will be established forever. (29:14)

When the wicked thrive, so does sin,

but the righteous will see their downfall. (29:16)

Introduction

“Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

“To err is human.”

There’s two modern proverbs for you. From Lord Acton and Alexander Pope.

Are they true?

There’s something important to understand about proverbs as a genre. They are true, but they are not true in every situation. They’re *sayings*. Something happens; someone does something; someone says a proverb; we all nod and say “ah, yep. So true.”

Someone’s power increases, and then they do something horrible? “Power corrupts!” Someone we respect makes a stupid mistake? “To err is human.”

True enough.

True in most situations. But does power corrupt everyone? Does every human fall and fail?

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In the Bible, power is not the problem. Every human has been given power. Every person is made in God’s image. We are meant to rule and reign; to fill the earth and subdue it. We are queens and kings under the King of Kings.

The question is, How are you *using* your power?

We’re going to look at just one aspect of power in the Proverbs: influence.

And we’ll explore 3 things about influence:

1. The Enrichment of Influence
2. The Erosion of Influence
3. The Emmanuel of Influence

1. The Enrichment of Influence

So, queens and kings, what is your influence supposed to do?

It’s supposed to enrich the soil of other people’s lives, so that they can have fruitful lives. When water is scarce and the soil is dry, your influence (19:12) is supposed to be dew that enriches and refreshes those around you.

Or look at chapter 16. Your face is meant to delight in goodness. When you see other people with potential, people using their gifts, your face is meant to brighten, to light up with delight. And you are meant to pour life-giving resources on them like a rain cloud in spring.

Proverbs 21:1 says that—from your heart into the lives of others—streams of refreshing and enriching water are meant to flow.

Human beings receive and give, receive and give, receive and give. Everyone is nourished. As the water from heaven falls on us, and gives us what we need, it flows through us and into other people’s lives, nourishing them. I have enough, so I can pour myself into *you*, so that *you* have enough. So that *you* can pour yourself into others.

“Wisdom for One-Anothering, Part 6: Influence”

Revelation 5:5, 8-12

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Who needs some dew? Who needs a springtime rain? Whose field needs irrigation? Whose work can I encourage? Who could use my investment of time or money? Who are the 2-3 people in my church that know me, like me, and trust me, who I can pour myself into, for their good?

What a glorious vision of humanity at its best! This is how it was meant to be. This is our calling as God’s image-bearers. This is our job as queens and kings with great influence.

2. The Erosion of Influence

Sadly, though, this flow of influence has been dammed up in our world, in our communities, in our churches, in our families, in our hearts.

All of us have had dry fields. All of us desperately needed enriching influence from others. All of us have been disappointed by people in our lives who have not channeled some of their abundance in the direction of our need.

Some of you have literally been *poor*. As you looked around to those with wealth and influence for help, they didn’t offer you dew; or a springtime rain; or a stream of water flowing toward your need.

Instead, their influence eroded the soil of your heart, your life, your work, your potential.

28:3: Like a driving rain, people with influence have hurt your fields with their self-centeredness. Their influence has left you without soil, without water, without crops, without a chance to flourish.

If you have never lived in poverty, you’ve still lived in *need*. And most of us have hoped for the enrichment of influence from others. But we have been left dry and parched.

And here’s the thing.

All of us, queens and kings in the image of God, have soaked up the enriching influence we’ve received. But all of us have failed to channel it toward the dry soil of

“Wisdom for One-Anothering, Part 6: Influence”

Revelation 5:5, 8-12

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others' needs. Whether we've blasted them with harsh rain or left them to become deserts, we have not given enriching influence. We've all caused erosion instead.

You and I cannot influence *everyone*. But there are people we *can* influence—many of them are sitting around you right now. And we have not allowed God's gifts to flow through us to them. They have not been as fruitful as they were meant to be, because you and I have not enriched them by our influence the way we were meant to.

In the Lord's prayer, some of us grew up saying “forgive us our trespasses”—forgive us for how we have gone too far. Others of us grew up saying “forgive us our *debts*”—forgive us for leaving so many good things, which you have commanded us to do, undone.

Often we only think of sin as *doing what we must not do*. But in the Bible, sin is also *failing to do what we must do*.

Our kids are indebted to us. They can never repay us for what we've given them. But we parents are indebted to our kids: we haven't poured our influence into them to enrich their lives the way we were meant to. Too often we've beat against their fields with blowing rains and left their potential eroded.

So many of you have invested countless of unpaid hours of labor into our church over the years. The church is indebted to you. But have you always had your eyes open? Are you always looking for the dry land of people's souls and spirits and careers and marriages? Are you always looking for ways that you can channel your gifts toward them for their enrichment? You remain indebted to your sisters and brothers. Often, they aren't the fruitful people they were meant to be, in part, because you have kept most of the enrichment you've enjoyed for yourself. The struggling people here have looked around, wondering if anyone's face might turn toward them, brighten, and bring life (16:15). They've longed for springtime rains. Many times, you've given them a drought.

We can fool ourselves. But people (28:11) can see the truth. The people who are in our lives and in our church are here because they *need us*. Too often, we are living for ourselves alone.

“Wisdom for One-Anothering, Part 6: Influence”

Revelation 5:5, 8-12

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This is what the Bible calls *unrighteousness*. It's not just taking something that's not yours. It's failing to give something that's not yours to keep for yourself. Like your influence.

3. The Emmanuel of Influence

We were made queens and kings. God's gifts and goodness have flowed into our lives. We are meant to channel God's gifts into the lives of those around us—our families, our colleagues, our church—to enrich them.

Instead, each of us has been deprived of the enriching influence we desperately need. And each of us has deprived others of the influence *they* desperately need.

The result is erosion. The soil of our lives, the soil of our family, the soil of our teams and neighborhoods and marriages and church is not enriched, and left to erode. This is not the way it was supposed to be.

14:34, right at the top, says: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns a people.” 16:12 says “a throne is established through righteousness.”

And what, ultimately, allows queens and kings like us to flourish? 20:28: love and faithfulness! Through *love* our throne is made secure.

We were meant to reign, but we've become failed queens and kings. But Jesus Christ has come to us. God with us. Emmanuel. To take up our humanity, and to reign on our behalf. To reign in love. Jesus exalts his nation through his own righteousness.

How does he do it?

In two ways:

1. Our Emmanuel of Influence, Jesus, has lived a perfectly righteous life in our flesh. Never missing an opportunity to pour himself into others. Giving them all the enriching influence his Father gave to him. Finding the parched ground of human hearts and lives all around him. Channeling his love and grace toward needy people, until their fields were not eroding but enriched and flourishing.

“Wisdom for One-Anothering, Part 6: Influence”

Revelation 5:5, 8-12

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2. By becoming parched and dry and eroded in our flesh. The sin of his people, his nation, is condemned in Jesus, its true King! The wicked (28:12) rose to power in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, and all Jesus’ friends and helpers went into hiding. His Father’s own face was even hidden from him. And the wicked triumphed in great elation.

Every real queen or king, God included, (14:34) is angry at shameful servants. Every ruler worthy of their influence (20:8) winnows out evil; (25:5) removes wicked officials from their presence.

But Christ our King, our Emmanuel of Influence, comes to us, and instead of judging and condemning *us*—instead of winnowing us out; instead of taking the influence of his Spirit from us—takes our sin and is condemned instead of us. And he pours streams of living water onto the parched, eroded soil of our hearts and lives.

Jesus is the wise king who gets rid of evil. But he’s the gracious king who doesn’t get rid of evildoers. Instead he pours himself out in grace and love for us!

And he still pours himself into our lives, with the enriching influence of his own Spirit, so that we can flourish; so that we can channel his streams of mercy and grace and love, influencing and enriching the people he has placed into our lives.

If you trust in Jesus the King, then you can be sure that he has taken away the guilt of your eroding influence. If you are in Jesus Christ, you can know that he has lived a life of enriching influence on your behalf. If you belong to King Jesus, our Emmanuel of Influence, he intends to make you a flowing channel of his love and power to enrich the people sitting around you, living around you, working around you. If you are his, he will do this in you and for you and through you for all eternity.

29:14— “If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will be established forever.”

He has been *way* more than fair with us. He’s drenched us with kindness and love. And he overflows from us to the people around us. That’s the kind of King Jesus is! And his kingdom is forever.

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Conclusion

To err is human? Yes, that's been our experience. But Jesus was and is fully human, and he does *all things well*.

Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely? Yes, that's what we've seen in our history books, on TV, in our church, and in our own hearts. But Jesus has all power, and instead of keeping it for himself, he channels it by his love until it enriches us and makes us flourish.

You've never seen a man like Jesus. And you've never heard of a God like Jesus. He is worthy to receive all blessing and honor and glory. Amen.