

If You Tend the Tree, You Will Eat Its Fruit

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[0:00] Green beans are not a very inspired way to begin a sermon. But if they're fresh green beans from the garden that you have picked with your own hands, Well, that's a different story.

Every year for a few weeks, in the middle of the summer, my family enjoys fresh green beans from our garden. We plant them in May, and we water them, and we weed them, and we water them, and we weed them.

And we do that a lot more times. And then June or July comes along, and then we finally get to eat them. Now, if you've never had fresh-picked green beans, then you don't know what a tragedy store-bought canned green beans are.

They might be the low point of Western civilization. They're easy to buy. They're easy to prepare. You dump them in.

You heat them up. That's all there is to it. And they're nothing, nothing like the real thing. They're an afterthought that mom throws on the plate to finish a meal.

[1:15] But fresh-picked green beans from your garden, that is a different story. You work for them. You might sweat for them.

You get dirty for them. And you really enjoy them. This afternoon, we're going to look at a proverb that takes a simple, obvious lesson from the garden or from an orchard and applies it to our lives in a way that hits every single one of us.

So take out your Bibles and turn in them to Proverbs 27 and verse 18. Proverbs 27, verse 18. This is what God's Word says.

Proverbs 27, verse 18. First, we want to see an obvious truth.

The obvious truth. And I don't want to or I don't have to belabor this point at all. It's found in the first line of this proverb. He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit. That point is obvious.

[2:26] If you take the time, the energy to tend, to care for a fruit tree, you'll eat its fruit. So how do you care for a fruit tree?

How do you care for a fruit tree? Well, it's going to take knowledge. You have to know how to care for a tree. You might need to go online and look up what it takes to take care of your particular tree. You might need to talk to an expert in order to ask him what your tree needs. Whatever. You'll need knowledge. And it's going to take some thinking ahead. If you're going to take care of your tree, you need to think ahead.

Late winter or early spring is the best time to prune an apple tree. And you need to know that. And you need to write it on your calendar. And you need to plan on doing that. And then when early spring, late winter comes, then you need to take the time to do it.

And then there's watering and fertilizing your tree. You have to watch for insects and other parasites and pests. And you have to take care of those.

[3:28] And that's how you care for a tree. How you tend a tree. Well, what happens when you water, when you prune, you fertilize, and you tend your fruit tree? Harvest time comes, and you get to eat its fruit.

When you care for your garden, when you care for your green beans, you get to enjoy fresh vegetables. You get to enjoy the labor of your hands.

Now, the person who doesn't grow and doesn't care and doesn't tend for his fruit tree doesn't get to eat its fruit. And does a person who doesn't care for and tend their green bean plants, do they get to eat the fruit?

No. They're stuck with those fallen, depraved green beans from the store. Or he doesn't care about the green beans.

He doesn't enjoy the green beans because he's done no work for them. He's taken no care for them. Well, that's obvious. That's clear as day. So now let's talk about the second point.

[4:34] The easily forgotten but still equally obvious truth. And that's found in the second part. He who looks after or attends his master will be honored.

And that's easy enough to understand. I think you probably see that in the world every day. If you take care of your boss, your manager, your superior, your employer, whoever's over you, you will be honored.

And you see that in the world all around you. People take care of their employers, and their employers honor them and take care of them. People that care and look after the business of their boss like a gardener looks after his garden are honored.

They're promoted. They're praised. And it's true. It happens all the time, every day, all around us. The man who takes care of his manager, who thinks about what he needs, who knows in his head what this man wants, what this woman wants, is honored.

And the employee that thinks ahead and thinks about, well, what does my manager need? What does my boss need? And then gives them what they need. They're honored.

[5:47] Well, the man who has a chip on his shoulder, who's always looking for a fight, who hates the management, who complains about working, he goes nowhere.

So, one man thinks about what his manager wants and gives it to him and is honored. And another man does as little as possible to collect his paycheck, and he's forever stuck in a menial position. And it's true. You see that all around. But we easily forget it. You easily forget it, and I have easily forgotten it. We are lazy. We're selfish.

We don't want to look like a suck-up or something. Or we put it piously. We don't want to be a people pleaser. And so we don't care for those people that are over us.

We do the bare minimum. We slide in the last minute in the parking lot, and we straggle back from lunch. And we mock the boss behind his back.

[6:58] We complain when he tells us to do something. We don't think about what our boss is going through, that he's a real person with real problems. Instead, every time they give us an assignment, we unload on them, and we complain about how we have to work extra.

And we talk back to them, and we complain when they tell us to do something that we don't like to do. In short, we make our manager's job and life as miserable as can be.

And after all, they are the one holding me back. Well, the book of Proverbs puts that whole line of thinking, that whole way of thinking, in the column of folly.

Folly. Remember, Proverbs pretty much aligns every activity that humans do into two columns.

Folly and wisdom. Making your manager's life miserable is folly.

Taking care of him is wisdom. Well, why is it so foolish? Why is it so foolish? Isn't it? It's pretty obvious.

[8:03] It's pretty obvious. If you're always complaining to your manager and making his life miserable, you're not going to be exactly the first person that he wants to reward.

But if you do good work, if you make their job easier, then you get rewarded. They will like you. And you'll be recommended when the time comes.

But, so if you want to, if you hate your job, and you want to move up, and you want a better job, then this is the biblical solution to it. This proverb is saying, stop complaining about it and start doing good work.

Start serving those who are over you. Now, we already talked about people-pleasing. And so you might ask, well, isn't this just all people-pleasing?

Well, it could be, and I think a lot of people probably do take it to that extreme. But that's not what this proverb is recommending. People-pleasing is worshiping people and kowtowing to your boss.

[9:07] We're not talking about that. Because what is the beginning of wisdom? The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Every single proverb in your Bible has its roots down in this principle that you should love and fear and worship God before everything else.

And so this proverb cannot mean that you seek to please your boss. You sin in order to please your boss.

You don't seek to please him at the cost of obedience. Remember the apostles before the Sanhedrin. They said, judge for yourselves whether it's right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

And we should please our bosses, our managers, as much as possible in every way, but without sinning, without worshiping them, without trusting them.

And so this proverb is clearly not talking about people-pleasing. Well, who does this proverb apply to? Who does this proverb apply to?

[10:18] It applies to anyone with a boss, a manager, over them in the workplace. So that includes most of you men and some of you women.

That's clear. But other people have masters over them that aren't in the workplace. And this proverb applies to you.

We pretty much all have masters in our lives, someone in our life that we are responsible to.

Children, you have teachers in your classrooms. My first grade teacher was named Mrs. Harley.

And when I was in her classroom, she was my master. She was in charge of me. She told me to be quiet. She told me to line up. She told me to do my work.

And it was my responsibility, my job to listen to her. She was my master. Children, your teachers are your masters. And that means you need to take care of them.

[11:16] This proverb is for children. Children. So what will that mean, kids? What will that mean? It will mean that when she tells you to line up, you line up.

And when she tells you to be quiet, you shut the zipper on your mouth and you throw away the key. And you have to remember, she has 20, 30 other children to take care of.

Her job is hard. Her job is hard. And she has a lot to think about. So if you do what she says right away with a happy heart, you're taking care of her.

You're obeying her. And guess what? She will honor you. She will honor you. When parent-teacher conferences come, which probably will be pretty soon, she'll sit down with your mom and dad.

And she'll say about how well-behaved you are and how good you are. And your parents might reward you. The whole point is you'll be honored. So think about it, kids.

[12:17] Do you want to be honored? Honor is something good that we should seek. Proverbs is holding it out and saying this is how you should do it. So do you want to be honored?

Do you want to be wise? Do you want to be like Jesus? Then obey your teachers with a happy heart. Do it right away. And you'll be taking care of her.

So this proverb applies to children in school. This proverb also applies to wives at home. Wives at home. Abigail shows us that.

Abigail was one of David's wives. David was in the wilderness and hiding. You remember? But he was in hiding from Saul. But he was not totally inactive. He and his small army of men were taking care to make sure that no raiders came in and stole the people's food and their animals and their crops.

So this is what David and his small band of men were doing. Protecting the Israelites. Protecting some of these men. Well, harvest time came. And David, do you remember the story?

[13:24] David sent some of his men to one of the richest men in the area named Nabal. And he asked for Nabal to share some of the food with them. And it was a sensible request.

He wasn't stealing. This only made sense. We've been protecting you. We've been making sure that no one can take your things. And so we should receive a part of the blessing. We should receive a part of the harvest.

We've taken care of the tree. And so we should eat its fruit. Did Nabal listen? No, he didn't listen. Nabal was a fool.

And he rudely ran off David's messengers. And when David heard this, he was furious. And he told his men, put on your swords and we're going to kill him.

And so he took 400 men and he's going to wipe out Nabal. He's going to wipe out all of Nabal's men. But Abigail was a wise wife.

[14:21] Nabal was a fool and his wife was wise. When she heard of her foolish husband's reply, she lost no time. She loaded up her donkey or her carts and all that.

And she got the food, a lot of food, and she's going to meet David. And when she met David, she fell on her face and she begged him to have mercy. And David's heart was moved.

David's heart was turned. And he decided against murdering Nabal. Abigail was wise. And she looked after her husband, even when he was a fool.

And she was rewarded for it. What happened? Well, when Nabal found out about his danger, it says his heart failed him.

And he became like a stone. Ten days later, he was dead. And not long after that, Abigail married David. And so she was rewarded.

[15 : 25] David, or she took care of her husband. And so she was rewarded. Wives, you can walk in Abigail's footsteps. You can be wise like Abigail.

Abigail thought ahead of what her husband needed. Even if he was a foolish husband, she was thinking about what he needed. And Abigail took action when her husband needed something. And she protected her entire household. Abigail wasn't a sit-on-the-couch, wondering-why-everything-is-going-wrong kind of woman. She was assertive. She was thoughtful. She was diligent about caring for her man. She took care of him. And if you look after your husband, and if you're thoughtful and assertive like that, then you will eat the fruit of your labor.

If you tend the tree, you'll eat the fruit. If you care for him, that gives him strength to love you. If you earnestly seek to give him the things that he needs, his heart will go out to you.

[16 : 29] If you set out to love your man so that all the other husbands are envious of how well you take care of him, then he will honor you. He will bless you.

If you tend the tree, you'll eat its fruit. So wives, this proverb is for you. Husbands, this proverb is for you too.

You can't dare sit there and think, I just need to relax. I'm in charge after all. And my woman, she'll take care of me and life will be great.

Because we all know that you have a master at your house too. And I'm not talking about the Lord. So you do the math. Who's left?

Martin Luther was a slob. And when he was single, his sheets never got changed. And his bed never was made. And he was a wreck. He had chili stains on his clothes.

[17 : 25] And his shirts looked like that thing that you're still wearing from college. And he was a nasty wreck. He was a first-rate slob. And then a new Lord moved into the house.

And she whipped Martin into shape. The new Lord, the new master, was Katie Vombora, Luther's wife. Lord Katie, as he often called her, set him straight.

Luther said this at one point, My wife can coax me as often as she wants. She has the entire dominion in her hand. And I yield to it. Husbands, we, every one of us, have a Lord Katie in our life. Our wives are the queen of the castle. And that means if we want to be good servants of her, if we want to be wise, then we need to take care of our master.

Well, how do you do that? You think about what she needs. You think about what she needs. And you protect her against nasty parasites that can pop up in her life.

[18 : 34] Too many assumed responsibilities. She's taking too much on herself. Or maybe nosy in-laws. Whatever might be creeping into her life and choking her and keeping her from flourishing.

If you want to honor her, or if you want her to honor you, then honor her. Honor her home. Honor her to-do list.

If she's romantic, you better be romantic too. And if she's easily overwhelmed with too much housework and too many kids, you better lend a hand.

If you want her esteem for you to shoot through the roof, then this is the biblical solution. You serve her. You love her. You take care of her.

If you tend the tree, you'll be honored. You'll eat its fruit. Well, who else does this proverb apply to? It applies to church congregations.

[19 : 36] Church congregations have men who are over them. The elders are responsible to oversee and to manage and to direct the church. So then, how can we look after our pastors?

Because if we look after our pastors and care for them and tend them, then we'll be blessed. We'll be honored. The book of Hebrews tells us one way. It says, Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.

They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. So when we obey our pastors, when we obey the elders, that makes their job a joy and not a burden.

It lightens their heart. And so if you obey when they speak, you water them and you fertilize them and you take care of them and you'll be blessed.

They'll be more fruitful and you'll enjoy their fruitfulness. Well, how else can you take care of your pastor? Paul tells us another way in 1 Timothy. He says, For the scripture says, Do not muzzle the ox while it's treading out the grain and the worker deserves his wages.

[20:49] One way that you can take care of your pastor, like you take care of a fruit tree, is to make sure that his physical needs are met. In other words, you pay him.

Pastors aren't extra spiritual people that can make food come out of nowhere. They can't put clothes on their children's back. They can't make their wives happy or take care of their wives without money.

They're just like you, with the same concerns, with the same needs, and one way that you take care of them is to pay them. And if you take care of them financially, they will take better care of you spiritually.

And that is what this is saying. So if they're constantly having to scrimp and wonder and be afraid about how they're going to make ends meet, then it's no advantage to you.

It's no advantage to you. And we don't really need to go on. You do a great job in this area. You do a great job. Keep it up.

[21:51] Tend the tree, and you'll enjoy its fruit. Who else does this proverb apply to? This proverb applies to Christians in general. So if you're not a husband, a wife, a child, or a pastor in this congregation, if you're a Christian, then this applies to you.

If you're a Christian, then you have one Lord and one Master, and that's Jesus Christ. And that's every one of us. He's the sovereign Lord of us all.

And if we care for Him, then we will be honored. Now, how can we care for Jesus? I mean, He's the Lord of heaven and earth.

He's the self-sustained creator of everything. He doesn't need anything from us. We can't give Him anything that He doesn't give us. Well, how can we look after Him?

We can look after His reputation. After His reputation. Men have all kinds of horrid, false opinions about Jesus. And they have low opinions about Jesus.

[22:52] They don't think about Him as highly as they ought. And so they drag His name through the dirt, and they use it as a swear word. And we can stand up for His reputation, for His name.

And when we are contending for Him, and contending for the faith, then we're taking care of Him. We're taking care of His reputation. We can look after His reputation as we make our lives beautiful, as we adorn the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is a beautiful message about a beautiful Savior. And we can look after that message, and we can look after Him by making our lives beautiful.

Because if we're not beautiful, then the message loses its shine. If a holy, beautiful message comes from an ugly, unholy, dirty person, then the message loses out.

So we need to tell the world by the way we live, Jesus is more beautiful than you realize. Jesus is so beautiful that He makes ugly people, sinful people, He makes them beautiful.

[24:08] And we do that by living a holy life. Well, how else can we look after Jesus Christ? After our Master. We can seek to advance His agenda in the world.

And isn't that what every servant is called to do? To take care of their Master's business. To make sure that their business succeeds. And so what is King Jesus' business?

Well, it's to advance the kingdom of God. It's to advance the kingdom of God. And so are you seeking to advance King Jesus' business in every part of your life?

That is what it means to take care of, to tend the Lord Jesus. Are you seeking to advance King Jesus' business in your family? Do your children know King Jesus?

Do they know His Word and His law and His Gospel? There's no excuse for them not to know. You have the Word of God and the language that you can read.

[25:09] You can read. You can speak. There's no excuse. You're fully equipped to advance the kingdom of God into your family. And so that is one way that we can take care of King Jesus' business.

Other ways. College students. Are you advancing King Jesus' business in your schoolwork? Are you advancing His name and His glory and His kingdom in your schoolwork?

Are you doing your papers like they would be done in heaven? Are you doing your projects like they would be done in heaven? Because as you're doing your papers, as you're doing your projects, as you're on campus, in your room, as you're with your roommates, if you make it a priority to take care of His business, to seek in whatever way you can to advance His kingdom, then you'll be taking care of Him and you'll be blessed.

Every conversation that you have is an opportunity to do His work. Every paper that you have is an opportunity to do His work. So you are your master's servant on the campus.

So act like it and He will honor you. And on the last day, Christians, on the last day, He will honor you for all of your work.

[26 : 32] He'll say to you, well done, good and faithful servant. So if we as brothers and sisters in Christ, if we take care of King Jesus and His business, then if we tend the tree, we'll enjoy its fruit.

Last question. Why should we do it? Why should we do it? There's probably lots of answers, but this is the one answer I want to give you. Because this is what Jesus did.

This is what Jesus did. His Father gave Him work to do. His Father gave Him business to take care of. And Jesus, though He was in the very essence, He was in the form of God, He took the form of a servant.

And so the Son came down and lived for 33 years. And what He did in that entire 33 years was to look after His Father's business.

To do His Father's will. This is what He told His disciples in John chapter 4 when that Samaritan woman had just run off that we talked about before the preaching.

[27 : 42] He said, My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. I'm all about doing my Father's will. His business, this is my business.

And His business is my life. This is what I enjoy. And so Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of this proverb. He lived to take care of His Father, to take care of His Father's glory, to advance His business, His kingdom in the world.

And where did the Father's business take Jesus? will you remember Philippians 2? And being found in the appearance as a man, Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

And therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Jesus pursued.

Jesus sought to advance and take care of the Father's business, even when it took Him into hell.

[28 : 49] It took Him into the wrath of hell itself. And what did the Father do in return? Well, it says here, He exalted Him to the highest place, that every knee should bow.

Jesus tended the fruit, or tended the tree, and it cost Him a lot. It cost Him His life. And when it came time for the harvest, He was able to eat the fruit.

This proverb is a reminder that God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. He opposes proud factory workers who complain and who selfishly only think about themselves, and they don't think about their employers.

He opposes children who in the classroom are only thinking about themselves and they're not obeying their teacher. And He opposes husbands. And He opposes wives that look at each other like vending machines just trying to get something that they need and they want.

But He loves and He rewards the man, the woman, the boy, the girl, the Christian, the worker, the student, who puts aside his selfish desires, who puts aside what he wants and will look after and will take care of his business, who will serve him wholeheartedly.

[30 : 16] Because those who tend the tree will eat its fruit. This is a rule for the way God has made the world. And so the sooner we get in tune with that, the sooner this starts to be part of our life, the sooner honor and blessing from the Lord will come our way.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for the Lord Jesus. We thank You that He looked after us and He took care of us.

Forgive us for being so unfruitful. and we look forward to the day when we will be perfected, when we will be brought into His presence, and we will be pure, spotless, and holy without any offense. And we will enjoy one another. Lord Jesus, thank You for being patient with us. Thank You for being so merciful to us.

Will You forgive us for being so selfish in our work, in our families, in our homes, in our church, all the ways that we seek our own agenda and we forget about what You want and what You've commanded for us.

[31 : 42] Lord, will You help husbands to take care of their wives? Help the wives to take care of their husbands. and may we all look after and pursue Your kingdom above everything else.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.