

*Opening comments overheard in a Leadership Class at imaginary Quest Bible College*

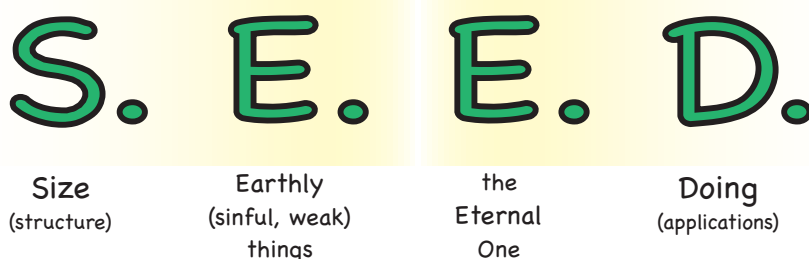
**Dr. Ed** (opening statements and key question)

Proverbs 27:1 acknowledges that—from our lowly and limited human perspective—life is uncertain. Aside from what God has revealed through Scripture, none of us know with certainty what will happen. Leaders make plans, but the outcomes are in God's hands (16:1, 9) and unknown to us. In light of Prov. 27:1, how should we deal with the uncertainty?

**Frank** (on the negative nature of Prov. 27:1 and the context)

Well, frankly, Proverbs 27:1 only tells us what **not** to do. We must not boast about the future, but the verse does not say anything about what we **should** do. Like the preceding verses (26:27–28) and the following ones (27:2–4), the first verse in chapter 27 is totally negative. So I think it is impossible to say much in answer to Dr. Ed's opening question.

Besides, I thought this is supposed to be a four-step S.E.E.D. Bible study. So why begin by asking the final-step D (doing) question? Shouldn't we start with step one, with the S question about the size and structure of the passage to be studied.



**Dr. Ed** (on the need to introduce the study)

Strictly speaking Frank is right, but I like to introduce the goal of each S.E.E.D. study with the D (doing) question up front, before getting into the weeds about the size (S) of the passage to be studied. Otherwise, studies can get off to a slow start. It is not very exciting to begin by debating whether we should study 27:1 by itself or with 27:2. There are pros and cons either way. — Frank is also right about the negative nature of 27:1 and the context.

**Evan** (on used 27:1 in evangelism)

I think Prov. 27:1 should be the focus of our study, because it is much easier to use in evangelism than the other verses in the context, 26:28 and 27:2. Moreover, it fits wonderfully with the rich fool parable in Lk. 12:16–21.

**Theo** (on Prov. 27:1–2 as a unit, anti-boasting)

What about the practical eschatology and anthropology in Prov. 27:1–2? I think we should study these two verses together as a unit, because both of them are against boasting, against boast about the future (27:1 is eschatology.) and about ourselves (27:2 is anthropology.). It is possible to split them up, but I don't think we should. — Either way, I think it is unethical to 'cherry pick' verses in order to use them in evangelism.

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**Dr. Ed** (on leadership themes in 27:1-2)

We should not 'cherry pick' isolated verses for any purpose. Nevertheless, 27:1 and 27:2 fit together very well for a study in leadership, since leaders must plan for and talk about the future (27:1) and are tempted to brag about plans and themselves in the process (27:2).

**Theo** (on including 27:3-4)

How about including 27:3-4 as well, since leaders often have to deal with anger and jealousy? Ephesians 4:31, Phil. 1:15-16, and 1 Tim. 2:8 show that Paul and Timothy had to do so.

**Dr. Ed** (on leadership themes in 27:1-6)

Solomon and whoever compiled the book of Proverbs were mainly addressing young men, some of whom would be future national leaders (27:11). Because of this, many verses in Proverbs are appropriate for leadership studies. The problem is that it is difficult to stop adding more and more verses. Verses five and six could also be included in today's study, because leaders must rebuke those who fall into sin. So we could study six verses (27:1-6) instead of one (27:1), two (27:1-2), or four (27:1-4). What do you want to do?

**Frank** (a blunt conclusion on study scope)

Aaah! That's enough! Let's just study Prov. 27:1 and the sin of boasting about the future.

## S size & structure

How many verses should be studied? What's the structure?

### ONE OR TWO VERSES?

There are several verses in the context (26:28-27:6) which have to do with the sinful and unwise use of the tongue, but 27:1 is the only verse in which a time factor (tomorrow) is involved. So 27:1 can be studied by itself. However, boasting is mentioned in both 27:1 and 27:2. So these two verses could be studied together, proud speech being the focus in both.

### A PROHIBITION with the reason for it clearly stated

Proverbs 27:1 is a negative command or prohibition with the reason for it given in the second line. The next verses (27:2) is an indirect prohibition, but the reason for it is not explained. There are many prohibitions in Proverbs and the reasons for them are more often than not clearly stated. (For instance, see 24:17-20.)

#### notes

## E earthly (sinful) things

What human weakness or sinfulness is seen in the text?

### BOASTING

Boasting in general is bad, but people usually boast about their past accomplishments, their current position, or their abilities. For instance, Haman boasted about his position, and possessions (Est. 5:11). Also see Prov. 20:14 and 25:14.

Boasting about the future is obviously foolish because of human ignorance and weakness, including death.

### TALKING ABOUT FUTURE PLANS

Talking about plans without committing them to the Lord is boasting about the future. James spoke against this in Jam. 4:13-16. The Lord did as well in the parable of the rich fool (Lk. 12:16-20). The planning in both cases was financial. The proud economic plans of many have been greatly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### notes

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**Dr. Ed** (on the most difficult aspect of this study)

Ok, we will mainly focus on 27:1 and the sin of ignoring God while boasting about the future. Of course, it is also wrong for practical reasons to boast about the future. The difficult part of the study will be associating our verse with the Lord. God is not easy to see in 27:1.

**Ichiro** (questioning why God seems left out)

Most people in Japan agree with our verse but would totally leave out God. I wonder why Solomon also seemed to leave out God in 27:1, by writing about what a day may bring instead of speaking about God's control.

**Theo** (on rejecting the idolatrous self)

In order to believe in the Lord, false gods must be rejected, and what we have in Prov. 27:1 is a call for the rejection of the autonomous self which is ignorant rather than omniscient like the Lord. Thus our verse is about rejecting an idol in order to make room for the Lord.

**Dr. Ed** (on the implied contrast in 27:1)

Exactly! Moreover, Prov. 27:1 is much like Psa. 115:4-8 in which man-made idols are described. They have mouths but do not speak and eyes but do not see, etc. Likewise, the self boasts but is unable to deliver. God is not easy to see in Prov. 27:1 because the verse is about the false god of self. However, the contrast between self and the Omnipotent One is implied.

## **E** the Eternal One

How is the text connection with the Giver of life?

### **WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO SEE GOD IN 27:1?**

God is never directly mentioned in chapter 27 and much of the chapter is about human relationship (27:2-6, 10, 14-17, etc.). Yet, the main reason God is difficult to see in 27:1 is because human ignorance of the future is stressed rather than God's control of it.

Proverbs 16:1-9 shows that God is in charge, but 27:1 simply reminds us that the individual human is not. It is necessary for an individual to plan future actions (16:1, 9), but there is no room for boasting about the outcome (27:1) because the human planner is **not** God.

### **ADMITTING WEAKNESS IS A GODWARD STEP.**

Nevertheless, admitting personal ignorance of the future and personal inability to control it can be a gigantic first step toward God (16:3).

#### **notes**

## **D** doing

What should we do and / or not do?

### **NEGATIVE APPLICATIONS**

I should not plan without God or speak like a proud fool about the future and be put to shame for doing so. I should also to some extent expect the unexpected.

### **POSITIVE APPLICATIONS**

I should plan, pray, and do whatever good I can, for God and others, today (3:27-28). Moreover, I must trust God regarding the results, since HE is in charge.

### **personal applications**

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**Dr. Ed** (the bottom-line D question)

At the beginning, I asked how we as Christian should deal with uncertainty. Frank, rightly showed that this D (doing) question can not be answered without first going through the other steps in the S.E.E.D. process. Now that we have done so, what do you think?

**Evan** (on using 27:1 in evangelism)

Well, I still plan to develop an evangelistic message based on Prov. 27:1. Human limitations are stressed in 27:1, and they are always stressed in evangelism. In addition, we saw that it is foolish for people to plan and boast about the future without considering God who controls the future (16:1, 9). The same point is made in evangelism all the time.

**Red** (on secular texts regarding uncertainty)

The business and technology books I have read speak about how to lessen uncertainty through various means, such as redundancy, so that if one system fails there will be a backup. They also recommend diversification, which simply means not putting all your eggs in one basket. There is wisdom in this (27:12), but none of the secular authors mention committing one's plans to the Lord (3:6, 16:1) or the safety that comes with pleasing the Lord (16:7).

**Socie** (on security through friendship)

What about the security that comes through having good friends and neighbors? Didn't anyone notice how often friends are mentioned in 27:6-14? When things unexpectedly go badly, as they often do (27:1), those friends and neighbors are very important (27:10).

**Indy** (on personal security with God)

I don't think Solomon taught that we should overcome uncertainty through human friendship. Personal fellowship with God is far more important.

**Dr. Ed** (on two aspects of godly security)

It could be both, Indy, though a personal relationship with God must, of course, come first. The Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, shows the importance of human relationships. True friends are helpful (27:6, 10), but the true friends that Solomon spoke of knew the Lord. So he was not speaking about friends replacing God.

**Socie** (on the significance of chapter 27 order)

I never said that friends can replace God! I just wanted to point out that once the false idol of the autonomous self is rejected (27:1-2), it is possible to focus on and appreciate the help that comes from godly friends (27:5-14). The order in chapter 27 clearly shows this.

**Indy** (on the danger of being overly anti-individual)

Ok, but notice that Solomon wrote about interacting with friends one-on-one in 27:5-14 rather than as a group. Socie is always negative about the individual, but Solomon was not.

**Dr. Ed** (on Solomon's anti-selfishness message in 27:1-2)

True, Indy, but in Prov. 27:1-2 Solomon spoke against two common manifestations of personal pride. So the main applications of today's study are personal but negative. We should not be like those who boast about tomorrow (27:1) and brag about themselves (27:2). The Lord is the Eternal One who is; I am not, and neither are you. — *In closing, let's read Jam. 4:13-17.*