

BUSINESS

"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight." (11:1)

INTRODUCTION—According to an adage ‘Honesty in little things is not a little thing’... and then another states that ‘Honesty is exact to the penny.’ It is the ‘little things’ and the ‘pennies’ we easily overlook that God looks over (Luke 16:10). Honesty is the same in principle no matter how large or small.

Some say you cannot exist in the ‘dog-eat-dog’ business world without pulling some ‘shady deals.’ If that is true, it is better not to succeed (16:8). But it is not true anyway!

I. HONESTY IN BUSINESS

A. Where Dishonesty Gets You (11:3).

1. Temporary Gains (28:8; 21:6). God eventually takes them away and gives them to the righteous.
2. Bitter Gains (20:17). There is a price to that kind of success.
3. Bad Reputation (10:9). Reputations need little time to become bad, but years of proving to be made good again.
4. Troubles His Own House (15:27). His dishonesty comes home to haunt him. His family may become dishonest in their dealings with him or come to completely distrust him.

B. Honesty on Both Sides of the Counter.

1. Seller (16:11; 11:1; 20:10,23). Just, accurate scales and measurements have been assigned by God. He expects merchants to be fair, not like the dishonest ones with one set of measures falling below the standard for selling, and the other measuring in excess of the standard for buying. He also condemns holding back goods to push up the price (11:26).
2. Buyer (20:14). Likewise the buyer is not to use his own fraudulent schemes for an advantage.

II. GIFTS AND BRIBES

- A. Bribery Condemned (15:27; 17:23). These are the kind of bribes given or received by one who is out to take advantage of another and make a profit at the cost of justice and fairness (cf. 29:4).
- B. Gifts Advantageous (17:8). Proverbs does not make a blanket statement condemning buying favors with gifts. Likely it is the motive and whether there is openness or secrecy about the gift, which determines which side of the line it is on.
 1. Wins Friends and Influences People (19:6).
 2. Paves Way to Social Advancement (18:16).
 3. Helps Get a Man Out of a Jam (21:14).

III. MOVING UP IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

- A. Gifts (18:16; 17:8). You have to ‘give’ a little to ‘get’ a little (cf. 19:6).
- B. Integrity (10:9; cf. 11:3; 12:22). It may be a slower way to the top, but it is far more secure. Honest men are always recognized.
- C. Competency (22:29). The quality of your work and efforts goes before you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Why is the principle of honesty not changed whether dealing with small or large amounts?*
- 2) *Can one exist in the business world if he stands for principles of right?*
- 3) *Dishonesty nets a profit, but what else does it bring (28:8; 20:17; 10:9; 15:27)?*
- 4) *Does God expect more honesty from the manufacturer or retailer than He does from the consumer?*
- 5) *Is it wrong to make a **sizable** profit in your work?*
- 6) *The wise man appears somewhat ambiguous concerning his instructions on gifts and bribes. Can you explain his position on the subject?*
- 7) *What will help you move up in the business world?*
- 8) *What good things will a man be recognized for in his business?*
- 9) *What partner do we **all** need in business?*
- 10) *Which three individuals are involved in the middle of every business transaction?*