

Proverbs 21:24-31

²⁴ The proud, haughty person, named “Scoffer,”
acts with arrogant pride.

²⁵ The craving of the lazy person is fatal,
for lazy hands refuse to labor.

²⁶ All day long the wicked covet,
but the righteous give and do not hold back.

²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;
how much more when brought with evil intent.

²⁸ A false witness will perish,
but a good listener will testify successfully.

²⁹ The wicked put on a bold face,
but the upright give thought to their ways.

³⁰ No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel,
can avail against the LORD.

³¹ The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.

The bright young mind who chose this passage- as part of our series of studying youth chosen scripture - loves horses and drew particular attention to the last verse:

“The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.”

Then commented “ I have to do the best I can and be prepared but remember that in the end God is the One guiding me”

What a wonderful and accurate interpretation of the text! I do all I can and also trust God. Co-operation with God.

Do not scoff, do not be lazy, do not be wicked, do not think human wisdom is the be all and end all! Use your gifts and skills well and trust God.

About 10 years ago, Professor Michael Tomasello, of Duke university, conducted several experiments with toddlers. He wanted to discover if human nature was essentially selfish and felt that toddlers were as untainted as possible.

In one:

A couple of 3-year-olds were presented with a challenge, if they pulled together on some rope the result was a flood of gummy bears raining down. They are delighted by the candy treats.

But what happens when one gets more than the other?

A meltdown, a tantrum or a fight?

No. Surprisingly, they tended to make adjustments to arrive at an equitable distribution. If one pointed out that she was deprived of gummies, the other quickly corrected the imbalance!!

In another experiment with infants who were just beginning to walk and talk. "He had those infants engage with an adult stranger they had met moments before," reports *Duke Magazine*. "They were put in situations where they could help the adult solve some simple problem, from fetching out-of-reach objects to opening cabinet doors when the adult's hands are full. They were, as it turned out, eager to help." From a very early age, says Tomasello, they could understand the goals of another person and cooperate with them in a self-giving way.

Tomasello says that his research is revealing that “we want to cooperate because it’s mutually beneficial to do so. But we also want to cooperate because we want to distribute the spoils of our joint effort fairly, because we ought to”.

You might say that cooperation deepens the sense of “we” — the notion that we’re all in this together, that we all deserve a share. Cooperation is a quality worth celebrating

Several studies are pointing to the same conclusion: Human beings have a desire to cooperate.

Despite what you see in halls of power around the world, people have an inborn desire to work jointly toward the same end.

While Tomasello’s conclusions and studies are about co-operation between humans, does it also tell us something about human co-operation with God?

Quite rightly we praise and celebrate the power of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God.

The Almighty who can and does do all things, the source of life and love, Jesus came to save us. His death and resurrection washes us clean of all wrongs and debts and opens the path to eternal life.

But do we forget our part? Do we forget God is not going to just do everything for us? Do we forget that we need to co-operate with God?

One of my Professors called it faith in “Daddy’s Credit card” to clear all responsibility and debt without thought or effort on our part.

Scripture is full of “Go”, “Obey”, “Do”, “Say”, “Share”, “Give”, “Follow”

We have a part to play and a God who commands co-operation.

Paul referring to when he and his fellow missionaries were with the church in Thessalonica says: “We might have made demands as apostles of Christ,...But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children”. Paul elevated the “we” over the “me,” not expecting an extra portion of praise or support.

If gummy bears had been available, he would have wanted to share them fairly.

Then he wrote “I urge and encourage you and plead that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory” (2:9-12).

If we are going to “lead a life worthy of God,” we are challenged to follow the path of Jesus and become the people that God made us to be. This means receiving the word of God, but also seeing that God’s word is already at work in us. God wants us to co-operate with one another and co-operate with God’s plan. God sends this message through both Holy Scripture and through our bodies, hearts and minds.

Not surprisingly, our model for this is Jesus , the One who was both fully human and fully God. He lived a life of cooperation, always elevating the “we” over the “me.”

First, Jesus co-operated with God. Even before his ministry began, he made clear that he was obedient to God and not to the devil. “One does not live by bread alone,” he said during his temptation in the wilderness, “but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Then he said, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test,” and “worship the Lord your God, and serve only him” (Matthew 4:1-10).

Throughout his ministry, Jesus made clear that he was serving God and not himself. Instead of satisfying himself physically, spiritually or politically, he put God first. Jesus lived out the Lord’s Prayer every step

of the way, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Co-operation with God was always his top priority.

Co-operation with God always His power source.

Second, Jesus cooperated with people around him. He built a team at the very start of his ministry, calling 12 disciples to follow him and share in mission. In the Sermon on the Mount, he called for co-operation in the teaching we call the golden rule, saying: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

On the topic of forgiveness, Jesus challenged his followers to co-operate with God and with each other in this important work. “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,” he predicted; “but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15).

Nothing, it seems, is to be done in isolation. The Co-operation is imperative.

Such co-operation continued when Jesus encountered 5,000 hungry people, and said to his disciples, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37). Then he multiplied five loaves and two fish, filling the stomachs of everyone in the crowd.

When it came time for Jesus to send out 70 followers to do his work, he commissioned them to “cure the sick” and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9). For Jesus, ministry and mission was not about him. It was all about co-operation with one another and with God.

Our challenge is to co-operate with God and with each other, following the example of Jesus.

“The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.”

“ I have to do the best I can and be prepared but remember that in the end God is the One guiding me”

Cooperation with each other. Cooperation with God