

# Handbook for Governing as a Statesman

The Statesman struggles to find the most effective solution to each problem faced. Let us look at the issue from a different perspective. The issue becomes clearer when we begin to consider the underlying values that must guide those solutions.

King Solomon, ruled during the tenth century B.C. He is described as a wise king, as well as one orchestrating the grandeur of his nation. From what we know of his governing, he comes close to being a Statesman, especially during the early portion of his reign. In his desire for his son Rehoboam to be an even better leader – literally, a Statesman – King Solomon provided advice and instructions for his son. These comprise his wisdom for being a good leader, but also for avoiding mistakes he had made. What makes these instructions intended for his son to govern as a Statesman so valuable is that they are available for us to study since they are recorded in the book of Proverbs within the Bible. Therefore, the advice King Solomon provided for Rehoboam to govern as a Statesman is available to us. Proverbs may be viewed as a handbook for governing as a Statesman and we also may benefit from it. King Solomon begins:

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction (1:8).*

King Solomon lays out his goals for his son in the instructions that follow:

*For learning what wisdom and discipline are; for understanding insightful sayings; for receiving wise instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity; for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man— a wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance (1:2-6).*

In this introduction, Solomon identifies the essential values necessary for good leadership: “righteousness, justice, and integrity”. Then, he addresses the issue of good decision-making resulting from those values: “shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion”. Another rendering of this goal is:

*That prudence (good judgment, astute common sense) may be given to the naive or inexperienced, And knowledge and discretion (intelligent discernment) to the youth (1:4).*

Thus, in this introduction, he addresses his goal as the art of statecraft. Solomon lays out the foundation he is convinced underlies all he is about to impart:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline (1:7).*

Properly understood, the Bible is God's instruction book for all of life, literally, God's handbook for living. Of particular relevance to leaders, the Bible is God's handbook for governing. Further, when we begin to look for God's mind for good leadership, Proverbs should be viewed as God's handbook for the Statesman.

What makes Proverbs even more valuable is recognizing that Solomon wrote it based not only on his successes, but his failures. In dealing with his failings, he wanted to help his son avoid repeating his own mistakes. The Statesman may be tempted to overlook the book of Proverbs because it does not deal with specific governmental decisions. Rather, it provides the fundamental values that support the heart of the Statesman and lead to making statesman-like decisions. It deals with the fundamentals of righteousness,

integrity, and justice, but also deals with many related issues dependent upon these values. Solomon places God's wisdom in the context of meeting these fundamental priorities. Notice the interplay of God's wisdom, righteousness, integrity, and justice in the second phase of his introduction:

*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity so that He may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of His loyal followers. Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and integrity—every good path. For wisdom will enter your mind, and knowledge will delight your heart. Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you, rescuing you from the way of evil—from the one who says perverse things, from those who abandon the right paths to walk in ways of darkness, from those who enjoy doing evil and celebrate perversion, whose paths are crooked, and whose ways are devious. It will rescue you from a forbidden woman, from a stranger with her flattering talk, who abandons the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God... None return who go to her; none reach the paths of life. So follow the way of good people, and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those of integrity will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous uprooted from it (2:1-22).*

His guidance is intended to help the leader to protect the right path in his own life and avoid falling into the wrong path. It even addresses the issue that led to Solomon's downfall: what he describes as "forbidden women". This early section alone is a treasure for the Statesman. However, it is essential to proceed through the remaining 27 chapters to build on the principles described in the introduction. It deals with issues confronting every segment of the administration of Government, including the executive, the legislative, as well as the judicial. Hence, absorbing its principles is valuable for all who serve in Government.

Throughout Proverbs, King Solomon identifies the fundamental issue as the "heart". King Solomon was convinced that what made a Statesman was the heart. He refers to the heart 64 times in his instructions, for example:

*Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life (Proverbs 4:23).*

Let us seek to benefit even more than King Solomon's son did and benefit as a Statesman in the way King Solomon intended for Rehoboam. One of the recurring themes throughout this instruction is "honor" that results from following his instructions. It is precisely "honor" that causes one to be remembered as a Statesman. I am convinced that all who have the desire to finish as a Statesman should study this valuable book, whose goal is to help you to finish with "honor" – in other words, as a Statesman. Let us take the first step today, beginning with Solomon's foundational truth:

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (9:10).***