

Proverbs Week #99 (11:1)

“A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.” Proverbs 11:1

We can demonstrate God’s righteousness and wisdom in the marketplace by having a reliable standard for measures and weights. Why is this topic so important to God? To make this more personal, how much does this matter to me? How might I feel if I learned my local gas station had reset their pumps so that a gallon of gas was really only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a gallon? How might my opinion change if I found out that they had been doing this for the last two years? If they had been charging a lower price based upon a false standard, would I be justified in being upset? I see on every pump a certificate that shows me that others take these things seriously too! Gas pumps are required to be certified by state officials. Like building codes and other laws, we seek to protect people through imposing fines for business or individuals who violate public trust. Can we say that God delights in gas pumps that sell a gallon that really is a gallon? Just weights are His delight.

To Learn: What other things can I consider to help me reinforce the importance of this verse? Both the Torah and Yeshua teach me the importance of loving my neighbor as myself. Without getting sidetracked on a discussion of “who is my neighbor,” I can also remember that man is created in the image of God. Every person alive, based upon being a created being, bears the image of their Creator. Regardless of how others act or treat me, I should give them a certain level of respect or dignity. As I understand and experience more of God’s love, I can also learn to love without first asking the question, “Is this person worthy of my love?” While I may have a genuine reason for considering someone as “not worthy” of my love or respect, I must never forget that I too am not worthy of God’s love and respect. He loved me first.

To Discern: Is it OK to give a friends and family discount? Does this kind of practice violate the wisdom this verse teaches? I would like to suggest that there is a valid difference between giving a discount to some and not giving it to others. I think the primary issue here is a false weight. A discount given is a reduction in cost but the percent of reduction is known. The false weight is different because you change your standard for measurement. You appear to be charging everyone the same (or measuring out produce that is the same) but in reality you are switching weights. The Hebrew word used in this verse for false is *מִרְמָה* (mirma) and communicates the idea of dealing with deceit or treachery. What appears to be the greater offense is not simply the giving of a discount but in the intention of profiting from another by a violation of basic trust.

To Receive: To embrace the wisdom of this commandment I must stop and think about the value of trust in relationships. This applies to how we treat each other but also applies to how we deal with one another. As a son or daughter do you change your standards of work based upon whether mom or dad asks you to do a task? If we are to work heartily unto the Lord (Col. 3:23), should our work standards change?

To Impart: In closing I would like to suggest three ways we can help the next generation take hold of this righteous standard. First, we must be careful as adults to conduct our business affairs with integrity and fairness. Second, for those with young children can we make these themes come alive? Can we find age appropriate ways to reinforce these truths that will not just be presented in the form of lectures or formal lessons? How can we as a community and families support the promotion of these ideas?

Finally, I want to repeat the verse I mentioned last week. *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)* May we grow in our awareness of what it means to be members of God’s Kingdom and to see our daily lives as service to our King. Our duty as His subjects is to live a life of trusting faithfulness to our Sovereign. It may be hard for us as Americans to grasp or be motivated by this concept, but there is a truth here that goes beyond literary themes. The songs we sing, the books we read, the games we play, and the movies we watch all impact our views of reality. These things can serve us as families or they can enslave us. May God continue to grant us His grace and wisdom as we serve Him. May He equip us, each day, by His Spirit with the knowledge and strength to serve Him.