



Expanding our Hearts and Minds

As we are winding down our readings and studies of Mark Twain's classic, *Huckleberry Finn*, I hope you see the connections between what Twain was doing well over 100 years ago and what Jane Elliott and the teacher in *The Wave* were doing and what I want to do. Trying to move people from bigotry, selfishness, foolishness, cowardliness, and hypocrisy takes some strong writing and brave activities. Huck struggles to find truth and freedom. His conscience had been trained by a flawed society, but somehow, his heart is basically good.

One of my questions to you is how did Huck develop and maintain a good heart? How do you?

Jane Elliott's students developed good hearts by undergoing a simple but powerful experiment on bigotry. Then you were able to hear them as adults testify to the way they overcame prejudice and taught their children to be kind. Ms. Elliott's experiment concerned racial prejudice, but along with that loathsome prejudice, come many other thoughts and behaviors that overwhelm people today—mean spiritedness, bullying, hateful talk, gossip, foolishness, rudeness, disrespect, lack of self control, self-centeredness...all of this is doing significant damage to society right now. We tried to cremate much of this at our Dead Words Memorial, but sometimes it's difficult to keep this hateful and irresponsible language from reemerging. "From out of the heart, the mouth speaks." **My next question is this: What is it going to take to change some hearts? Your heart? What do you need to change? What difference will it make?**

Mark Twain's novel woke America up. Huck Finn, the unsophisticated orphan with a number of flaws, has come to represent the best of America. Jim, the runaway slave, has come to represent the best in what a caregiver and real man looks like. This is amazing. I know it may not seem so to you now, but I want to put this out there for you to think about. Literature offers lots to think about as well as lots to enjoy. Brave people offer examples that can challenge us to be better than we thought we could be, and their work is often banned or criticized rather than accepted.

You all are very young and so impressionable to peer pressure. Perhaps only a few of you will be strong enough to lead by example instead following the crowd or following your laziest and most selfish instincts. I'm trying to recall myself at your age, and I know it was a struggle. (remember the patrol belt and water fountain!) I know I made it, however, because of strict moral standards and unconditional love from parents, strong spiritual influences in my life, devotion to education and especially reading, a sense of humor, and probably a good dose of luck. **My third question to you is this: What do you see as the things in your life that offer you the best guidance? You may want to recall some 7 Habits ideas here.**

Iwant you to love words and literature. I want you to become clear thinkers and creative writers. I want you to have expansive vocabularies. **But most of all I want you all to be good people.** Nothing is more important to me. That's why work ethic counts for so much of your grade. That's why everything matters.

I'm going to share a number of DVDs with you that have to do with what both Huck and Jody Baxter had to deal with in their young lives. I will remind you of how both boys handled adversity, but I will let you learn from more modern situations and movies as well. (It needs to be said as well, that Shakespeare himself was ranked the number one writer of all time largely because of the way he showed human nature to humans. This was in addition to his incredible grasp of language.)

Before we see our next DVD, I want to give you a sample of some of the wisdom I was taught as a child and as an adolescent. It's from ancient wisdom literature in the form of proverbs, many of which were written by King Solomon (Remember, he was the one Huck and Jim had much conversation about.) I'm dividing it into three parts. **For each part** I'd like for you to rank the proverbs according to the top 5 most important ones to you with annotation about why you ranked them as you did. Then just free write whatever you want to write about in relation to any of these proverbs. Please turn your responses in. I will be the only one to read them unless you share them with peers. These nuggets of wisdom could become useful for your Antholio as well as in your life.

Proverbs of Solomon (Wisdom literature)

Part 1

- 1:32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them, but whoever listens to me (wisdom) will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm.
- 2:12 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse.
- 3:3 Let love and faithfulness never leave you...then you will win favor and a good name.
- 3:27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act.
- 4:7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
- 4:14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the ways of evil men. Avoid it; do not travel on it.
- 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart...keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- 6:12-15 A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, who winks with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, who plots evil with deceit in his heart—he always stores up dissention, therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant.
- 6:16-19 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into mischief, a false witness who pours out lies and one who stirs up dissention. (This one follows the ancient form of list poetry, by the way. Remember your List Poetry is Not Listless handout.)
- 9:8-9 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a good man and he will add to his learning.
- 9:12 If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.
- 9:13 The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge.
- 10:1 A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.
- 10:7 The memory of the good man will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.
- 10:8 The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.
- 10:12 Hatred stirs up dissention, but love covers over all wrongs.
- 10:17 He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.
- 10:19 When words are many sin is not absent.
- 10:21 The words of the good man nourish many, but fools die for lack of judgment.
- 10:23 A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct.
- 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him.

Part 2

- 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.
- 11:16 A kindhearted woman gains respect, but the ruthless gain only wealth.
- 11:27 He who seeks good finds good will, but evil comes to him who searches for it.
- 11:29 He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind.
- 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.
- 12:15 The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.
- 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, 12:23 ...the heart of a fool blurts out folly
- 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his soul, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.
- 13:4 The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.
- 13:10 Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.
- 13:13 He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded.
- 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.
- 14:7 Stay away from a foolish man for you will not find knowledge on his lips.
- 14:15 A simple man believes anything, but a wise man gives thought to his steps.
- 14:23 All hard work brings profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.
- 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stores up anger.
- 15:14 The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.
- 15:22 Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.
- 15:32 He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.
- 16:23 A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.
- 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.
- 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
- 17:12 Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.
- 17:28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.
- 18:9 One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.
- 18:13 He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.

Part 3

- 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience...
- 19:19 A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.
- 19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.
- 20:11 Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is good and right.
- 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.
- 21:23 He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.
- 22:1 A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.
- 22:10 Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. (That's what ISS is for)
- 22:24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man; do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways.
- 24:1 Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company for their hearts plot violence and they talk about making trouble
- 24:10 If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!
- 24:26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.
- 25:26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a good man who gives way to the wicked.
- 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly or you will become like him yourself.
- 26:11 As a dog returns to its vomit so a fool repeats his folly.
- 26:18 Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking!"
- 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.
- 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.
- 28:23 He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.
- 29:1 A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.
- 29:8 Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.
- 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

For extra credit, see if you can find other proverbs from various cultures and time periods that teach similar lessons.

I think you could find a use for these in one of your Antholio chapters as well as in your life.