

Wisdoms to Live By: Expressed by Timeless Proverbs

David Tanner

Paul E. Kassel, Contributor

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This book is a delightful exploration of the origin and contemporary relevance of proverbial wisdoms.

David Tanner writes that it was his fourteen-year-old grandson who inspired him to pen *Wisdoms to Live By*. When the boy was sent to the principal's office for using foul language with a girl, Tanner told the boy his action caused an equal and opposite reaction from the principal. This was just like the proverb based on Newton's third law of motion, "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." His grandson understood the concept and quoted the proverb to others. It kept him from getting in trouble again. Tanner realized "the importance of wisdoms that are expressed by timeless proverbs."

As a result, Tanner researched and compiled wisdoms based on proverbs into this engaging book, which he organizes into broad subject areas: behavior-related wisdoms, action-related wisdoms, insight-related wisdoms, thought-related wisdoms, and poetic wisdoms. In each section, the author quotes several proverbs or common sayings, briefly explains their historical derivation, and discusses their meaning. On occasion, Tanner ties the proverb to an article or an excerpt from a book. Other times, he uses examples taken from his career as a research director at DuPont, or from his own personal experience, to illustrate the proverb. The net effect is a tidy, short entry for each of forty wisdoms.

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again" is one example. Tanner identifies the originator of the proverb as Thomas Palmer—he included it in his book *The Teacher's Manual* (1840)—but, Tanner indicates, the saying was popularized by British writer Edward Hickson who wrote, "'Tis a lesson you should heed: If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Tanner then references an article that addresses how stroke victims are achieving near-total recovery by continuous efforts: "The most important part of rehabilitation is to practice, practice, practice ... in order to succeed."

In the book's final section, Tanner includes twelve poems by Paul E. Kassel, each of which conveys a little piece of wisdom. Kassel's poems are at times humorous and at times poignant, creating a nice counterbalance to Tanner's text.

The author has selected a wide range of proverbs and demonstrates that each still has contemporary relevance. He keeps the book moving along by offering just enough colorful discussion of each "wisdom" without getting bogged down in detail. In addition to writing in a friendly and approachable style, Tanner lightens up the book with several *Frank and Ernest* cartoons that are perfectly chosen to augment particular proverbs.

Wisdoms to Live By is nicely designed, with short, easily readable sections. The author includes references for each article and book quoted and offers a short biography on the back cover. The cover illustration of an illuminated yellow star is appropriate if somewhat understated.

This well-conceived and well-written book is interesting and educational, and makes for delightful reading.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (October 31, 2014)

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