Although we might not much like the fact, we need others. And they need us! We are designed to work together with our community. We “sharpen” each other! This doesn’t eliminate the need for individual effort (see v. 18) but it does allow us to enhance one another’s work. And our community helps us to become better people particularly because we see our own faults reflected (usually very, very clearly) in others. Think you’re surrounded by liars? Better check your own honesty. Hate how inconsiderate someone else is? Just how considerate are you? Verse 19 reminds us that we see ourselves in others. And we need that reflection to help us become better. Such reflections might be a bit humiliating, but we must embrace that humility. Our fallen human nature, as mentioned in verse 20, leads us to be always hungry for more. If we want to be “satisfied” then we have to embrace humility. Verse 21 tells us that praise is like a refining furnace. If a person can retain his humility even when he is given recognition, admiration, and praise, then he is made of very fine material—like silver or gold. Most people cannot handle praise. Just as much of the material in a refining pot or furnace burns away, revealing the valuable metal left over, most people readily fall away from God when they are subject to praise and adulation. We fall so easily to pride. It takes true strength of character to retain humility under such conditions. But a fool, it appears, persists in foolishness regardless of any extreme efforts to correct him. It is sadly easy to fall into foolishness, but incredibly difficult to maintain wisdom. It seems clear that embracing humility is a necessary aid to our efforts!

**Proverbs 27:17-22**

**Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.**

**Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.**

**As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.**

**Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.**

**As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.**

**Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.**

**Schooling Fish of Malpelo Island**

Malpelo Island, off the coast of Colombia, is home to a unique underwater ecosystem. It features an astoundingly huge population of sharks. Silky sharks and hammerheads appear in extremely large numbers, but there are some rare shark species that can be found nearby as well. All of these predators are drawn to the site by the vast schools of prey fish. Trevally, juvenile red snapper, and other varieties of fish school together around the island. The pressure of a large number of nearby predators has encouraged these fish to take schooling to the next level. Sharks are able to detect electrical signals from moving prey, so they swim among the schooling fish, searching for weakness or illness—or any individuals that stick out. But the fish pack so tightly together that their electrical signals are thought to overlap, registering as a single, huge organism to the sharks’ electrical senses. The schooling fish here are also known for “shape-making,” packing together in a shape loosely resembling an extremely large fish. Such techniques confuse the sharks, preventing them from identifying individuals or singling them out as prey. These fish appreciate their community! Hiding humbly within the pack of their fellows, each individual contributes to the protection of the group. But they avoid anything which might make them stand out from the crowd. Schooling fish would probably recognize instantly the dangers of praise, which are so hard for us to see!

Amazon Prime

Wildest Places

Season 2: “Pacific”

Episode 4: “Islands”

Start: 34:38 (17:22 from End)

End: 38:32 (13:28 from End)