

THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF LIFE

The Book of Proverbs

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INTRODUCTION

The five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) teach us God's laws. Christ magnified those laws in the New Testament, teaching us to keep God's laws in *spirit*. The book of Proverbs also teaches us how to keep God's laws—but taught as a loving parent would teach a child: to prevent them from wasting their lives, making their life count for something, preparing them to take a mature, contributing role in the family.

Today there are thousands of “self help” books published, raking in millions, to help us find a “better life.” Most reflect only fads, are elementary, or altogether untrue—not addressing the real source of our problems. The critical factor they always leave out is, of course, *God*. But the one, true “self help” book is the Bible. It not only answers many questions about life, it also shows *how* to live a better life. And among the books of the Bible, Proverbs is key in this regard.

Proverbs is not a book to be taken for granted, or skimmed through as you might read an opinionated “self help” book. Proverbs does not reflect the wisdom, philosophies, or religions of men. Indeed, man's way can be proven wrong because it simply does not work; but the wisdom of God as revealed in Proverbs is justified because the results add quality to our lives.

First and foremost, *the book of Proverbs is a divine revelation, granted to us through grace, providing us with the understanding needed to face the challenges of life, according to our created purpose.*

What is the book of Proverbs?

The book of Proverbs is consistent in purpose with the rest of the Bible: *to teach the simple mind of man great spiritual truths*. This is the Bible's intent; it is the aim as well of Proverbs. Like Scripture itself, Proverbs was meant to be studied, understood, meditated upon, and lived out—transforming our lives.

Proverbs is simple, practical, pragmatic. Man searches for spiritual truths in the mystical. But God reveals *deep spiritual things* through the simplicity of a book like Proverbs.

Proverbs utilizes natural, real-life illustrations (often in the form of poetry) to bring out moral, social, or religious principles. It is based on the fundamental truth that God's way is the *only* practical approach to life—the only way that yields the results we all seek.

Proverbs covers topics ranging from how to choose the right kind of friends, the perils of sexual immorality, the value of hard work, dealing justly with others in business, the dangers of strong drink, treating the poor with compassion, the values of strong family ties, the folly of pride and anger, and the characteristics of genuine friendship. In short, it teaches us how to apply or live by God's standards.

In one sense, Proverbs is a book on child rearing, addressing numerous fundamentals of life our young people have yet to discover. But ultimately, Proverbs is a legacy for God's people across all time, providing concise teachings to help us find true happiness. It is a roadmap back to the Garden of Eden; to a "city with true foundations, whose builder and maker is God"—the Kingdom of God.

Who wrote the book of Proverbs?

While Solomon typically gets the credit for Proverbs, the book is actually a *collection* of sayings from numerous sources—including Solomon. Its contributors likely included Joseph; the wise men mentioned in I Kings 4:31; and many others. It is assumed to have actually been published by King Hezekiah of Judah, about 200 years after Solomon. Essentially, their musings were the observations of humble men commenting on things they had learned through their relationship with God. Solomon himself is said to have spoken some *three thousand proverbs*, only a few of which were included in the book of Proverbs (I Kings 4:32). Some authors are actually noted in Proverbs: Agur (Prov. 30:1) and King Lemuel (Prov. 31:1).

As a book, Proverbs survives today because it was duly canonized by the Levitical priesthood, confirming God's approval on the collection.

COMMENTARY ON PROVERBS

All biblical passages are from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order*.

Proverbs 1: The importance of Proverbs

1-6: The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know **wisdom** and instruction; to perceive the words of **understanding**; to receive the **instruction** of wisdom, **righteousness**, and **judgment**, and equity; to give prudence to the **simple**, knowledge and discretion to the **young** man. A wise man will hear and will increase learning, and a **man of understanding** shall attain unto wise counsel [in order] to understand a proverb and its interpretation, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

Wisdom—The fundamental truth all other truth is built on. "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

Instruction—Discipline or training. "All Scripture *is* God-breathed and *is* profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16).

Understanding—The end result of careful mediation on divine revelation. “Give careful consideration to the things *that* I am telling you, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (II Tim. 2:7).

Righteousness—Righteousness results from living God’s way. “Now *the* fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace” (James 3:18).

Judgment—Making right choices through the power of God’s spirit. “And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and understanding, in order that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be pure and without offense unto *the* day of Christ” (Phil. 1:9-10).

The simple—The “open-hearted”—with minds ready to receive.

The young—The inexperienced, who *need* both knowledge and discipline.

The man of understanding—This is the one who seeks out “wise counsel”—so that he might direct his life as God desires.

Advice to young men

7: The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The key to wisdom is to appreciate God and develop a real relationship with Him.

8-9: My son, hear the instruction of your father and forsake not the law of your mother, for they *shall be* an ornament of grace to your head and chains around your neck.

Again, Proverbs is presented largely as *loving guidance* from one’s parents. “ ‘And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the* Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:18).

10-19: My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; we will watch secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those who go down into the pit; we shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses *with* plunder; cast in your lot among us, and let us have one purse.” My son, do not walk in the way with them! Keep back your foot from their path, for their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird, but they lie in wait for their *own* blood; they watch secretly for their *own* lives. So *are* the ways of everyone who gets gain by violence, who takes away the life of its owners.

The final victim of a life of evil is ... you!

Wisdom calls

20-27: Wisdom cries outside; she utters her voice in the streets; she cries in the chief place of gathering, in the openings of the gates; in the city she utters her words, *saying*, “How long will you love simplicity, simple ones? And will scorers delight in their scorning? And will fools hate knowledge? Turn back at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I called, and you refused *to* hearken, I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention; but you have despised all my counsel and would have none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes; when your calamity comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when trouble and pain come upon you.”

Everything in life testifies of God’s way—that it is the only right way of life. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God!’ They are corrupt; they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek *after* God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not *even* one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, those who devour My people as men eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? (Psa. 14:1-4).

28-33: “Then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD; they would have none of my counsel; they despised all my correction. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own devices. For the waywardness of the simple shall slay them, and the complacency of fools destroys them. But whoever hearkens to me shall dwell safely and shall be secure without fear of harm.”

This is stark realism: you reap *exactly* what you sow (Gal. 6:7).

Proverbs 2: The rewards of wisdom

1-5: My son, if you will receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding; yea, if you cry after knowledge *and* lift up your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver and search *for* her as for hidden treasures, then you shall understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

Again, a father calls out to his sons, exhorting them to seek God’s way.

6: For the LORD gives wisdom; out of His mouth *comes* knowledge and understanding.

The ultimate source of wisdom and understanding is God—but this requires a real relationship with Him. If we love and respect God with all our heart and mind and soul, God’s response will be a “spiritual awakening.”

7-8: He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous; *He is* a shield to those who walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of *right* judgment and preserves the way of His saints.

Living righteously is the key God's blessings.

9-11: Then you shall understand righteousness and judgment and equity, every good path. Wisdom shall enter into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasing to your soul. Discretion shall preserve you and, understanding shall keep you.

You are not going to learn what is right from *this* world. Pattern your life after God's Word; for His values are based on judgment, mercy, and faith. This is the only way of life that leads to happiness and peace. Align your life with God and seek to become Christ-like in all things.

12-15: To deliver you from the way of the evil *man*, from the man who speaks wicked things, those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice to do evil *and* delight in the perversities of the wicked, whose ways *are* crooked, and *are* devious in their paths.

Bad company corrupts good manners. Sin is contagious because we all have human nature. No matter how strong you think you are, if you hang around the wrong influences you will reap the consequences.

16-17: To deliver you from the wanton woman, *even* from the stranger *who* flatters *with* her words, who forsakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God—

Some temptations and snares are easy to recognize; others are not. The beauty and desirability of a wanton woman can take a man captive.

18-19: For her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the dead. None that go unto her return again, nor do they take hold of the paths of life—

The end result of such sin is *always* destruction.

20-22: In order that you may walk in the way of good and keep the paths of the righteous. For the upright shall dwell *in* the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Those who live wicked and rebellious lives have no lasting place in society. "I will say to the reapers, 'Gather the tares first, and bind them into bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my granary' " (Matt. 13:30).

Proverbs 3: Advice to young men

1-4: My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments; for they shall add length of days, and long life, and peace, to you. Do not let mercy and truth forsake you; bind

them around your neck; write them upon the tablet of your heart; and so you shall find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Proper family values are godly values, proclaiming your loyalty to your spiritual family and Father in heaven. This is what a righteous father teaches his children—looking to their future.

5-7: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.

Don't trust what society teaches you. Don't doubt the values you have been given. Don't think that you know better or that there is "alternative" way of life. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25). Don't believe what you hear or see in this life. Life is complex. Walk by faith.

8-10: It shall be health to your navel and marrow to your bones. Honor the LORD with your substance and with the firstfruits of all your increase; and your barns shall be filled *with* plenty, and your presses shall burst *with* new wine.

Don't let anyone convince you that obedience to God is blind faith. When you live God's way, you are blessed—because He loves you as His own child.

11-12: My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be weary of His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, even as a father *corrects* the son *in whom* he delights.

Punishment is usually for our own good. God is not afraid to punish us for the greater good. A loving parent will discipline their child. But a weak-minded parent teaches their child nothing, afraid of hurting their feelings. So they allow every indulgence, hastening the child's destruction.

13-18: Blessed *is* the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for the merchandise of it *is* better than the gain from silver, and its produce more than the gain of fine gold. She *is* more precious than rubies; and all the things you can desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days *is* in her right hand; *and* in her left hand, riches and honor. Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace. She *is* a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her; and happy *is everyone* who holds her fast.

Wisdom is when we understand *how to apply* the truth of God. This is what strengthens our faith beyond knowledge—to experience the happiness and joy God fills our life with.

19-20: The LORD has founded the earth by wisdom; by understanding He has established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

God is the Creator and He knows best how to take care of us. He knows how and He knows when.

21-26: My son, do not let them depart from your eyes; keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they shall be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you shall walk in your way safely, and your foot shall not stumble. When you lie down, you shall not be afraid; yea, you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster, nor of the desolation of the wicked when it comes; for the LORD shall be your confidence and shall keep your foot from being taken.

Find yourself slipping back into your former life? Don't let that happen. There are many pitfalls in this life, and God will allow you to be tested (Ex. 20:20).

27-35: Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do *it*. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go and come back again, and tomorrow I will give," when you have it with you. Do not plan evil against your neighbor since he dwells trustingly by you. Do not strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm. Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways, for the crooked man *is* an abomination to the LORD, but His secret *is* with the righteous. The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the righteous. Surely He scorns the scorers, but He gives grace to the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

You must be concerned about others. Who is your brother and sister? Everyone you meet. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if he does not love his brother whom he has seen, how is he able to love God Whom he has not seen? And this *is* the commandment *that* we have from Him: that the one who loves God should also love his brother" (I John 4:20-21).

Proverbs 4: The benefits of wisdom

1-4: O children, hear the instruction of a father, and be attentive in order to know understanding, for I give you good doctrine. Do not forsake my law. For I was my father's son, tender and the only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. He also taught me, and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live."

God includes *honoring our parents* as one of His commandments because our parents have learned many lessons from life. When facing a decision, weigh *their* counsel.

5-9: Get wisdom; get understanding; forget *it* not, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she shall keep you; love her, and she shall preserve you. Wisdom *is* the principal thing; get wisdom; and with all your getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote you; she shall bring you honor when you embrace her. She shall place upon your head a garland of grace; she shall bestow upon you a crown of glory.

Again, wisdom is the *application* of knowledge and understanding—so we can live a successful life and avoid common pitfalls. It is to live the kind of life God wants for you.

10-13: Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of your life *shall be* many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in the right paths. When you go, your steps shall

not be hampered, and when you run, you shall not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; keep her, for she *is* your life.

Wisdom guides us to live productive lives, promotes sober habits, and controls evil passions. It harmonizes our lives with God, thus prolonging life.

14-19: Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil *men*. Avoid it; do not go in it; turn from it, and pass on! For they do not sleep except when they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away unless they cause *some* to fall, for they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day. The way of the wicked *is* as darkness; they know not at what they stumble.

A godly life is a healthy life—mentally and physically. It is also enlightening—meaning that you find a greater purpose for life over time. But for the wicked, everything ultimately goes wrong. They learn nothing from life, but live without purpose or direction.

20-23: My son, attend to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart, for they *are* life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Above all, guard the door of your mind with diligence, for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Sin begins in the mind. “That which springs forth from *within* a man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evils go forth from within, and *these* defile a man” (Mark 7:20-23). “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings out good things; and the wicked man out of the wicked treasure brings out wicked things” (Matt. 12:35). What you think matters—because that is truly *who* you are.

24: Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and devious lips put far from you.

Learn to tell the truth. Lying causes only harm, and a liar will become *known* for his lying.

25-27: Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and all your ways *will be* established. Do not turn to the right hand nor to the left; remove your foot from evil.

Be steadfast and consistent in all your doings.

Proverbs 5: Warning against adultery

1-6: My son, attend to my wisdom; bow your ear to my understanding; that you may keep discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a wanton woman drip as a honeycomb, and her mouth *is* smoother than oil. But her end *is as* bitter as wormwood, sharp as

a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on the grave. She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable—you cannot know *them*.

Flattery and seductiveness are deceptive and deadly—playing on the weaknesses of others.

7-14: Now therefore hear me, O you children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your ways far from her, and do not come near the door of her house, lest you give your honor unto others and your years unto the cruel; lest strangers be filled *with* your wealth, and your labors *be* in the house of a stranger; and you moan when your end *comes*, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say, “How I hated instruction, and my heart despised correction; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ears to those who taught me! I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the congregation and assembly.”

If you don’t listen, you’ll be sorry; the fruits will bear this out.

15-20: Drink waters out of your own cistern and running waters out of your own well. Let your fountains be dispersed abroad *as* rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only your own, and not strangers’ with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. *Let her be as* the loving deer and pleasant doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and be ravished always with her love. For why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

The relationship between a man and a woman in marriage is holy and must be upheld, protected, and never defiled through adultery.

21-23: For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall breathe his last.

God is watching; everything is a matter of *choice*.

Proverbs 6: More warnings

1-5: My son, if you are surety for your friend, *if* you have struck your hands in a pledge with a stranger, you are snared with the words of your mouth, and you are caught with the words of your mouth. *Then* my son, do this now, and deliver yourself when you have come into the hand of your friend: go, humble yourself and make your friend sure. Do not give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself as a gazelle from *the hunter’s* hand, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Getting involved in other people’s misguided financial problems is not wise.

6-11: Go to the ant, sluggard; consider her ways and be wise, who having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her food in the summer *and* gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet, a little sleep, a little slumber, a

little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come as one who travels, and your want like an armed man.

Be proactive. Don't wait for someone else to tell you what to do—get up and get moving.

12-15: A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth, winking with his eyes, speaking with his feet, pointing with his fingers. Perversity *is* in his heart; he is always planning mischief; he causes discord. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; instantly he shall be broken without remedy.

There are people who premeditatedly lie to you to take advantage of you.

16-19: These six *things* the LORD hates; yea, seven *are* an abomination unto Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that plots wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies; and he who sows discord among brethren.

God is merciful and loving, but these are things He absolutely hates.

20-26: My son, keep your father's commandments, and do not forsake the instruction of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you go, they shall lead you; when you sleep, they shall keep you; and *when* you awake, they shall talk with you. For the commandment *is* a lamp, and the law *is* light, and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her seduce you with her eyelids—for by means of a harlot *a man is vanquished* to a piece of bread; and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

This is major snare in life, having brought ruin to countless men.

27-35: Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent. They do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; yet *if* he is found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the goods of his house. But whoever commits adultery *with* a woman lacks understanding; he *who* does it destroys his own soul. He shall get a wound and dishonor; and his shame shall not be wiped away. For jealousy *is* the rage of a man; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not accept any recompense, nor will he be willing *even* if you multiply the gifts *for him*.

The sin of adultery will destroy you; you cannot escape the consequences.

Proverbs 7: The immoral woman

1-5: My son, keep my words and store up my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live; and keep my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them upon your fingers; write them upon the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call

understanding *your* kinsman, so that they may keep you from the wanton woman, from the stranger *who* flatters with her words.

Look at wisdom and discretion as something to be kept right before your eyes, so you are always reminded of God's way of life. Love wisdom as you would a friend or kinsman.

6-23: For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and I saw among the simple ones, among the youths, a young man with no understanding, passing through the street near her corner. And he went the way to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And, behold, there a woman met him, *with* the attire of a harlot and a wily heart. She *is* loud and stubborn; her feet do not stay in her house; now *she is* outside, now in the streets, and lies in wait at every corner. And she caught him and kissed him, *and* with an impudent face she said to him, "*I have* peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. Therefore I came out to meet you, earnestly to seek your face, and I have found you. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband *is* not at home, he has gone on a long journey. He has taken a bag of silver with him *and* will come home on the day of the full moon." With much *alluring*, seductive speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she induced him. He goes after her immediately, like an ox goes to the slaughter, or like a fool to the correction of the stocks, until a dart strikes through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare and does not know that it will cost him his life.

Steer clear of *all* sexual temptation. "But flee youthful lusts" (II Tim. 2:22); "Flee sexual immorality" (I Cor. 6:18). An immoral woman is like those described in Isaiah 3:16—proud, wanton, seductive. But remember: "*Let* marriage *be held* honorable by all, and the marital union *be* undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers" (Heb. 13:4).

24-27: Hearken unto me now therefore, O you children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways; do not go astray in her paths, for she has cast down many wounded; yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. Her house *is* the way to the grave, going down to the chambers of death.

Don't think for a moment that you can get away with adultery. There will be consequences, and you may pay the ultimate price—*death*.

Proverbs 8: In praise of wisdom

1-3: Does not wisdom call? And does not understanding put forth her voice? She stands in the top of high places, by the place where the paths meet. She cries in the gates, at the entrance of the city, *at* the doors. [She says...]

It's as if wisdom says, "Look around you. Doesn't life itself prove that what I'm saying is true?"

4-12: "To you, O men, I call; and my voice *is* to the sons of men. O you simple ones, understand wisdom; and, you fools, be of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things;

and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things, for my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; there is nothing twisted or perverse in them. They *are* all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom *is* better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion.”

Wisdom—doing what God wants you to do—is the key to a happy life. It is the most valuable thing you can ever hope to possess.

13: “The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; I hate pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the perverse mouth.”

We must learn to think like God, to hate what He hates.

14-18: “Counsel and sound wisdom *are* mine; I *am* understanding; I have strength. By me kings reign and princes decree justice. Princes rule by me, and nobles, and all the judges of the earth. I love those who love me; and those who seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor *are* with me; *yea*, enduring riches and righteousness.”

Success, honor, position, wealth—these only come by wisdom.

19-21: “My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and what I give *is better* than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, that I may cause those who love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasuries.”

Wisdom’s ultimate result is *righteousness*.

22-31: “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth ever was. When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth. Before He had made the earth, or the fields, or the highest part of the dust of the world, when He prepared the heavens, I *was* there; when He set a circle upon the face of the deep; when He established the clouds above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He gave to the sea its limit that the waters should not pass His command, when He appointed the foundations of the earth, even I was *with Him* as a master workman; and I was daily *His* delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable world, His earth; and my delight was with the sons of men.”

God possesses the ultimate in wisdom, which He utilized in creation.

32-36: “And now therefore hearken unto me, O you children, for blessed *are those who* keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and do not refuse it. Blessed *is* the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors, for whoever finds me finds life and shall obtain favor from the LORD. But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all who hate me love death.”

Do not refuse wisdom; rejecting wisdom leads to destruction and death. One of Satan's biggest lies is that you can sin without consequences. Just ask Adam and Eve.

Proverbs 9: Wisdom and stupidity

1-3: Wisdom has built her house; she has carved out her seven pillars; she has prepared her meat; she has mixed her wine; she has also furnished her table. She has sent out her young women; she cries upon the highest places of the city, [saying...]

Wisdom represents itself as a perfect work of God, according to counsels proceeding from an infinite understanding.

4-6: "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here." As for the one who lacks understanding, she says to him, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding."

Proverbs is ideally for the young and naïve, who can benefit from the experiences of others.

7-9: The one who rebukes a scorner gets shame to himself; and the one who rebukes a wicked one *gets* himself an insult. Do not reprove a scorner, lest he hate you; give rebuke to a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise one, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

Fools never listen to sound advice; but the wise and righteous will seek out counsel. Indeed, there is a time to speak up and there is a time to keep quiet. "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him" (Prov. 26:4). The wise man knows he has shortcomings, because he has humility. He strives for perfection (Matt. 5:48). He can be corrected, admonished. "Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). The fool cannot be corrected. The fool only reacts out of pride and becomes angry.

10: The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

You must have a relationship with God. God has to speak to you and you have to speak to God.

11-12: For by [wisdom] your days shall be multiplied, and the years of your life shall be increased. If you are wise, you shall be wise for yourself; but *if* you scorn, you alone shall bear *it*.

Wisdom will help you live a long, happy life—one *not* cut short due to sin.

13-18: A foolish woman is clamorous; *she is* simple and knows nothing. And she sits at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call those who pass by, who are going straight on their ways: "Whoever is thoughtless, let him turn in here." And to one lacking understanding, she says to him, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead *are* there; her guests *are* in the depths of the grave.

Beware of being ruled by your flesh, your sex drive, or by physical beauty. Beware of Hedonistic philosophies—“if it feels go do it.” Just because something is socially accepted doesn’t make it right. Just because everybody else is doing it doesn’t make it right before God. Give thought to your actions and take responsibility for your life.

The Proverbs of Solomon

Proverbs 10:

Chapters 1-9 are addressed to the youthful mind (as from a parent to a child) in an attempt to teach fundamental lessons of life. The next section—Proverbs 10-24, the first set of the “Proverbs of Solomon”—is addressed to the adult mind, with brief bullet-like statements. Its purpose and focus is different, and it uses a more concise writing style.

1: A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son *is* grief to his mother.

A wise son avoids doing stupid things that bring shame to the family.

2: Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death.

Money acquired through dishonest means destroys your character. The profit Ahab got out of Naboth’s vineyard was a curse to him (I Kings 21:19-24). Judas’ thirty pieces of silver, gained by betraying Jesus, became a curse to him. If you worship money, you will be cursed.

3: The LORD will not allow the soul of the righteous to famish, but He thwarts the desire of the wicked.

The Lord will not allow the righteous to go hungry (Psa. 37:25); God, who fed Elijah by the ministration of ravens at the Brook Cherith, does not let His people be without food (I Kings 17:4-6). When it comes to your livelihood, worrying does no good. Rather, in times of uncertainty, God wants you to look to Him. “Do not be anxious about your life *as to* what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor about your body *as to* what you shall wear. Is not life more than food, and the body *more* than clothing? Observe the birds of heaven: they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor do they gather into granaries; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? But who among you, by taking careful thought, is able to add one cubit to his stature?

“And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. Now if God so arrays the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall* He not much rather clothe you, O *you* of little faith?

“Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we be clothed?’ For the nations seek after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But *as for* you, seek first the kingdom of God and

His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day *is* the evil of that *day*” (Matt. 6:25-34).

4: He who deals *with* a lazy hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

God always blesses the work of the industrious man. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with all your might; for *there is* no work, nor plan, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave where you go” (Eccl. 9:10).

5: He who gathers in summer *is* a wise son, but he who sleeps in harvest *is* a son who causes shame.

Being industrious brings success and honor to your parents. Laziness brings shame to you and your family name.

6: Blessings *are* upon the head of the just, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

Living God’s way *always* brings blessings.

7: The memory of the righteous *is* blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

The upright will be long remembered—their name honored. But the wicked will be completely forgotten.

8-10: The wise in heart will receive commandments, but a prating fool shall fall. He who walks uprightly walks surely, but he who perverts his ways shall be known. He who winks the eye causes sorrow, but a prating fool shall fall.

The wise listen to good advice, and want to be taught, led, corrected. Walking God’s way is the only sure way to be safe.

11: The mouth of a righteous one *is* a well of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

A good man’s words are filled with wisdom and grace—because they are God’s word’s. What he says to others is edifying. But the wicked hide behind false pretenses.

12: Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.

“Do not render to anyone evil for evil, *but* be prepared to do what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, as much as is your part, be at peace with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves; rather, leave *this* to *God’s* wrath; for it is written, ‘ “Vengeance is Mine! I will recompense,” says *the* Lord.’ Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for in doing this you will be heaping coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:17-21).

13: In the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod *is* for the back of him who is without understanding.

The words of a wise man will prove him, as do the scars on the back of a stupid man.

14: Wise ones store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish *is* near ruin.

Wise men try to make things better, but fools only become worse and worse.

15: The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city; the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

Contrasts two very divergent lifestyles.

16: The labor of the righteous *tends* to life; the fruit of the wicked *tends* to sin.

Nothing in life is static: you are either getting better, or getting worse.

17: He who keeps instruction *is* in the way of life, but he who refuses reproof goes astray.

Following God's wisdom is a "way of life"—and keeps you on the right path.

18: He who hides hatred *with* lying lips, and he who speaks a slander, *is* a fool.

Hypocrisy is a hidden liar, and lying lips cover the malevolence of a wicked heart.

19: In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips *is* wise.

If you talk too much you're going to get into trouble. Stop and think—and say something truthful, gracious, edifying, loving.

20-21: The tongue of the righteous *is as* choice silver; the heart of the wicked *is* worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

The value of listening to the righteous is in being *edified*.

22: The blessing of the LORD itself makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

If a blessing is from God, there will be no "down side"—nothing to ever regret.

23-24: To work out evil devices *is as* sport to a fool, but a man of understanding has wisdom. The fears of the wicked shall come upon him, but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

You get out of life what you put into it. Good people see their dreams fulfilled, but the wicked realize their worst fears.

25: As the whirlwind passes, so the wicked is no *more*, but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and practices them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not practice them shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:24-27).

26: Like vinegar to the teeth, and like smoke to the eyes, so *is* the sluggard to those who send him.

Don't rely on untrustworthy people.

27: The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

God grants you a long life because you make it count for the greatest good.

28: The hope of the righteous *is* gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Knowing God gives you real hope. But the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.

29-30: The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright, but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity. The righteous shall never be moved, and the wicked shall not remain in the land.

Living God's way brings courage, boldness; God becomes an ever-present source of strength.

31-32: The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue shall be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked speaks perversity.

Righteous people speak wisdom, having an edifying effect on others. “For the one who desires to love life, and to see good days, let him restrain his own tongue from evil, and not allow his lips to speak deceit. Let him avoid evil, and let him *continually* practice good. Let him seek peace, and let him *earnestly* pursue it, because the eyes of *the* Lord *are* on *the* righteous, and His ears *are open* to their supplications. But *the* face of *the* Lord *is* against those who practice evil” (I Pet. 3:10-12).

“In the same way also, the tongue is a little member, but it boasts great things. See how large a forest is set ablaze by a little fire. And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of unrighteousness. So has the tongue been set among our members—*the one member that* defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of life, and is set on fire by Gehenna. Now then, every species of animals and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But the tongue no human being is able to tame; *it is* an unrestrainable evil, full of death-dealing poison” (James 3:5-8).

Proverbs 11

1: False balances *are* an abomination to the LORD, but a perfect weight *is* His delight.

God hates dishonesty, lying, and hypocrisy in how we deal with others. You might fool others, but you'll never fool God. Nothing is hidden from Him (Mark 4:22).

2: When pride comes, then shame comes [soon after]; but with the lowly [humble] *is* wisdom.

Ultimately, God will bring down the proud. Pride comes before the fall (Prov. 16:18). If you want to boast in something, boast in God (Jer. 9:23-24).

3: The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

Integrity simply means *being honest*.

4: Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

When the end comes for this evil age, riches and money won't save your life. But being right with God will assure a place in the age to come.

5-6: The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way, but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them, but transgressors shall be taken in their own lust.

Living according to God's ways is the only guarantee of a happy life.

7: When a wicked man dies, his hope shall perish; and all that he expected from his power comes to nothing.

Power and wealth cannot save you; and in death the wicked only face judgment.

8: The righteous [man] is delivered out of trouble, but the wicked comes in his stead.

Even the righteous have troubles, but God is their deliverer.

9: A hypocrite destroys *his* neighbor with his mouth, but through knowledge the righteous shall be delivered.

Spreading gossip is hypocrisy because we all have sins. And you can ruin someone's reputation doing so.

10-11: When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked are destroyed, *there is* joy. By the blessing of the upright a city is lifted up, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

When godly people are in charge, the city (business, church, etc.) does well. Indeed, when wicked leaders are removed, people rejoice. A righteous person can bring blessings to others, but a wicked person brings only curses on others.

12: One who is void of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding remains silent.

It is wise to get along with everyone, even if it means “biting your tongue.”

13: A talebearer is a revealer of secrets, but one who is of a faithful spirit keeps the matter hidden.

Don't tell your business to just anybody. A person who trashes others will eventually be trashing you. But a person who keeps your trust has your best interests at heart.

14: Where *there is* no wisdom, the people fall; but in the multitude of wise counselors *there is* safety.

Before you make a big decision, get different perspectives from those known for their wisdom.

15: He who is surety for a stranger shall suffer *for it*; but he who hates being surety is safe.

Stay out of other people's financial problems. Instead, teach them to rely on God. He has enough for them too.

16: A gracious woman keeps honor, and strong *men* retain riches.

A gracious woman will guard her honor, and wise men will protect their riches.

17: The merciful man does good to his own soul, but *he who is* cruel troubles his own flesh.

Be kind—because it will come back to you. Do good for others, do good for yourself. But a cruel spirit will actually harm your health.

18-19: The wicked makes a deceitful work, but one sowing righteousness *has* a sure reward. As righteousness *tends* to life, so one pursuing evil *pursues it* to his own death.

Living God's way of life brings a sure reward—now and for eternity.

20: Those who are of a perverse heart *are* an abomination to the LORD, but the upright in the way *are* His delight.

A “perverse heart” means *twisted* thinking that is contrary to God's design and purpose.

21: *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished, but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

There is never “safety in numbers”—especially if you are wicked.

22: *Like* a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, *so is* a beautiful woman who is without discretion.

A pig with a jewel is still a pig. A woman’s beauty will be in vain without proper discretion.

23: The desire of the righteous *is* only good; the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

A righteous person hopes only for good things—based on God’s standards. But the wicked live in anticipation of God’s wrath.

24-26: There is one who scatters and yet increases, but one who withholds what he should give *comes* only to poverty. The soul who gives generously shall be made prosperous, and he who waters shall also be watered himself. He who withholds grain, the people shall curse him; but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him who sells it.

People who are generous, God blesses. He who gives to the poor, gives to God (Matt. 25:31-46). God has His watchful eye on the kind and generous. Remember, you cannot out-give God.

27: He who diligently seeks good seeks favor; but he who seeks mischief, it shall come to him.

This is the basic “sow-reap” law again—do good and you’ll find favor.

28: He who trusts in his riches shall fall, but the righteous shall blossom like a branch.

Your money will ultimately fail you—it cannot bring you life. Yet the righteous are compared to trees blossoming with fruit—that everyone partakes of.

29: He who troubles his own house shall inherit the wind, and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise in heart.

The wicked destroy everything they touch, even their own family.

30: The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life, and he who wins souls *is* wise.

The righteous are like a “source of life” to everyone around them.

31: Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner!

Ultimately, God will bring *everything* into judgment—granting rewards and punishments. For the church, that time is now (I Pet. 4:17-18).

Proverbs 12

1: Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction *is* stupid.

Wise people want to be instructed, even corrected. Pride gets in the way of being corrected.

2-3: The good *man* receives grace from the LORD, but He will condemn a man of wicked devices. A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

God's grace is everything. Strive to do what is right and be established in God's grace.

4: A woman of virtue *is* a crown to her husband, but she who causes shame *is* like rotteness in his bones.

A wise, virtuous woman honors her husband; she is in subjection to him (I Pet. 3:1-6). But a wife who brings shame to the marriage—through whatever means—becomes a curse.

5-7: The thoughts of the righteous *are* right; the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit. The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them. The wicked are overthrown and *are* gone, but the house of the righteous shall stand.

The counsel of the righteous is based on goodness and truth; the counsel of the wicked is based on lies and deception.

8: A man shall be praised according to his wisdom, but he who is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

People know you by your works, which reflect your wisdom—or your foolishness.

9: Better is *he who is* despised and has a servant, than he who honors himself and lacks bread.

It's better to support yourself and eat, even if you are disliked, than to assume honor for yourself and end up starving.

10: A righteous *man* regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

The righteous have respect for animals, but fools treat them with cruelty.

11: He who tills his land shall be satisfied with bread, but he who chases fantasies is void of understanding.

If you farm the land, you'll have what you need. But if you're a "dreamer" who chases get-rich-quick schemes, you'll go hungry.

12: The wicked desires the spoils of evil *men*, but the root of the righteous yields *fruit*.

Wickedness always covets what other people have. But the righteous work for what they have, and they don't stand around coveting.

13: The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips, but the just shall come out of trouble.

A liar and a deceiver will always be exposed. But the testimony of the righteous will vindicate him of false accusations.

14: A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth, and the reward of a man's hands shall be given to him.

Your reward in life depends on what you *say* and what you *do*; you will get what you deserve.

15: The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes, but he who listens to advice *is* wise.

A fool trusts in his own judgment, but a wise person wants to learn and do what is right. He has the humility to know that he doesn't know everything.

16: A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent *man* covers shame.

When a fool is annoyed, he quickly lets it be known—blows his top. But smart people will ignore an insult—and remain quiet. A prudent man knows to do the right thing at the right time.

17: *He who* speaks truth shows forth righteousness, but a false witness [displays] deceit.

Always speak the truth and you'll never go wrong.

18: There are those who speak like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals.

Words can hurt, sometimes causing much emotional pain—but the right words can also soothe and encourage and heal. See James 1:26; 3:5-10.

19: The lips of truth shall be established forever, but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.

What is true will always be true, but every lie will ultimately perish.

20-21: Deceit *is* in the heart of those who imagine evil, but to counselors of peace *there is* joy. There shall no harm befall the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with trouble.

The righteous pursue peace, and God blesses them with joy. But the wicked only know trouble.

22: Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truly *are* His delight.

A person who lies to gain unfair advantage is detestable; but God honors honesty.

23: A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools pours out foolishness.

Don't always tell all you know. Indeed, only fools indiscriminately "spill their guts."

24: The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the lazy shall be under tribute.

Diligence earns top positions, but a lazy person must always be told what to do.

25: Heaviness in the heart of man weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.

Being negative leads to depression; but an encouraging word from a friend can change things.

26: The righteous [man] *is* more excellent than his neighbor, but the way of the wicked seduces them.

Friends can be an asset or a liability—choose them carefully.

27: The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Diligence is most precious; always make the most of everything, and let nothing go to waste.

28: In the way of righteousness *is* life, and in that pathway *there is* no death.

"Enter in through the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it; for narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me' " (John 14:6).

Proverbs 13

1: A wise son *heeds* his father's instruction, but a scorner does not hear rebuke.

A wise person listens to and learns from the more experienced members of his family—because he can learn from their experiences. And recognizing the need for correction confirms that you have a contrite heart (see Luke 18:17).

2: A man shall eat good from the fruit of his mouth, but the soul of the transgressor *shall eat* violence.

This is another way of putting the basic "reap what you sow" law of cause and effect.

3: He who keeps his mouth keeps his life, *but* he who opens his lips wide shall have destruction.

Excessive talking is selfish trait—and usually leads to sin. Just say what you mean and mean what you say. You should learn when to shut up and when to speak up. Say only things that edify. Stop and think before you speak.

4: The soul of the sluggard desires and *has* nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be abundantly gratified.

Hard work is part of God's plan and purpose for man. So if you want something, sweat for it; then you'll appreciate what God has given to you. Remember, that for which you do not suffer, you will not appreciate.

5: The righteous hates lying, but the wicked one is loathsome and comes to shame.

Lying can become a habit, and turn into a huge obstacle in your life. Remember, Satan is the father of lying (John 8:44).

6: Righteousness guards the one *who is* upright in the way, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

Righteous living can bring the protection of God.

7: There are *those* who pretend to be rich, yet *have* nothing; and those who pretend to be poor, yet *have* great riches.

Money isn't everything. The rich typically know nothing of God's way of life and the happiness it brings. But often, the poor are rich in what matters: love, mercy, faith, joy.

8: The ransom of a man's life *is* his riches, but the poor does not hear rebuke.

Wealth can become all-consuming, leading the a state where one's riches own them.

9: The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Righteousness brings light to everyone you come into contact with; the result is truth, mercy, joy.

10: Only by pride comes contention, but with those who take advice *is* wisdom.

Prideful people seem to always be stirring up strife. But the wise shy away from such influences.

11: Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished, but he who gathers by labor shall increase.

Honest labor will satisfy your needs, but ill-gotten gain will never satisfy.

12: Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but *when* desire *is* fulfilled *it is* a tree of life.

Everyone know what it feels like to deal with great disappointment. But when what you hoped for comes to pass, there is great joy! Genuinely trust in God and He will give you your *heart's desires* (Psa. 37:4). Jesus said He came to bring us an *abundant life* (John 10:10).

13: Whoever despises the Word shall be destroyed, but he who fears the commandment shall be rewarded.

If your life is not aligned to God's Word, you will at some point inherit eternal death. But if we respect God's will and purpose for our lives, He will ultimately make everything right.

14: The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

The wise provide people with *right information*, to make right choices—which leads them to eternal life.

15: Good understanding gives favor, but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

Having “good understanding” goes hand-in-hand with wisdom—bringing favor from God and man. But a life void of godly understanding leads only to difficulty.

16: Every prudent *man* deals with knowledge, but a fool lays open *his* folly.

Prudence means doing the right thing at the right time—i.e., showing wisdom. You understand the big issues of life, you understand human nature. You know when to speak and when to be quiet, when to act and when to do nothing—always with your focus on God's will. But a fool—he just makes a mess of everything.

17: A wicked messenger falls into mischief, but a faithful ambassador *is* health.

Doing your job with integrity is most refreshing to an employer.

18: Poverty and shame *shall be to* him who refuses instruction, but he who regards correction shall be honored.

No employer wants a worker who can't be taught to do their job better. But those who seek correction and who want to learn, they will advance, be promoted, be shown favor.

19: The desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but *it is* an abomination to fools to turn from evil.

To the foolish, the idea of denying yourself pleasure—even if evil—seems ridiculous. Indeed, the carnal mind, as Paul wrote, is hostile to God's teachings (Rom. 8:7).

20: He who walks with wise *men* shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

You are *strongly influenced* by the company you keep; it determines your social level and moral standards. In I Corinthians 5:9-10, Paul instructs us to *not spend time with* those given to idolatry, covetousness, drunkenness, or immoral conduct. (See I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14-16.)

21: Evil pursues sinners, but to the righteous good shall be repaid.

Those given to wickedness run from sin to sin; but living a godly life brings great reward.

22: A good *man* leaves an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the righteous.

Among the righteous, there is a strong sense of responsibility toward their extended family. They work to provide for even their grandchildren.

23: Much food *is* in the tillage of the poor, but there is *that* which *is* destroyed for lack of judgment.

Even a poor man can eat if he is willing to work the land.

24: He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

By the neglect of correction, bad habits become instilled in children. Don't be afraid of using corporal punishment in a measured, godly way—never in anger or frustration. God corrects and disciplines us in love (Heb. 12:6-11).

25: The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

God always provides for His people, and the righteous never go hungry (Psa. 37:25).

Proverbs 14

1: Every wise woman builds [up] her house, but the foolish plucks it down with her hands.

A righteous woman will fulfill her role as a wife and mother (see Proverbs 31). A wise woman acknowledges her God-ordained, which is primarily to help her husband be a more godly man—thus *building up* the home.

The wife was created as a spiritual aide, a spiritual co-heir with her husband. Her relationship with her husband is intended to teach him about his relationship with God. Society, however, insists that fulfillment for her lies in independent accomplishment. But this denies her created purpose—to serve her family. She is given the gifts of beauty, tenderness, courtesy, intelligence, and grace—being the glory of the man. She is his motivation to love, protect, and provide for the family.

Thus, wise wives are subject to their husbands (I Pet. 3:1-4); they exercise maturity and soberness in all things (I Tim. 3:11; 4:7).

2: He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but *he who is* perverse in his ways despises Him.

The critical issue in our calling is not that we are sinners—we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23). The key issue is our attitude of humility, repentance, and love for God. *That* is fearing God.

3: In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

The fool is “full of himself” and speaks great swelling words about his accomplishments.

4: Where no cattle *are*, the stall *is* clean, but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.

You have to “spend money to make money.” You may have a clean barn, but you aren’t making any money. Don’t be lazy; work hard and make wise investments.

5: A faithful witness will not lie, but a false witness will speak lies.

A person of integrity always tells the truth. Be careful who you trust.

6: A scorner seeks wisdom and does not *find it*, but knowledge *is* easy to him who understands.

Fools will never find wisdom—they don’t even know where to begin looking. But knowledge and understanding come easily for those with godly wisdom.

7: Depart from the presence of a foolish man when you do not perceive *in him* the lips of knowledge.

There is no point in fellowshiping with those who embrace foolish ideas. It will only drag you down. We are to shun “profane and vain” notions, which only lead to ungodliness (II Tim. 2:16). And you’ll know almost as soon as they open their mouth!

8: The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way, but the folly of fools *is* deceit.

A prudent person thinks deeply about the choices he has to make—and seeks wise counsel.

9: Fools laugh at sin, but among the righteous *there is* favor.

Fools don’t understand the law of “cause and effect.” But sin is no laughing matter!

10: The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share in its joy.

Only you can truly know and feel the depths of whatever trial you are facing. On the other hand, only your heart can truly know the joy that comes from relief.

11: The house of the wicked shall be overthrown, but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

This also applies to your family and lineage: overthrown or flourishing...

12: There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death.

This is the “broad path” Jesus talked about (Matt. 7:13). Everybody seems certain that it is the right way, but it only leads to ruin.

13: Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that joy *is* heaviness.

Laughing on the outside, crying on the inside. We might find momentary pleasure in this life, but the realities of human existence still weigh us down.

14: The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, but a good man *shall be satisfied* with his own actions.

Another way of stating the basic “reap what you sow” principle.

15: The simple believes every word, but the wise *man* watches his step.

The naïve are gullible, and easily taken advantage of; but the wise are careful in their dealings.

16: A wise one fears and departs from evil, but the fool rages and is confident.

Fear God and do what is right—and don’t foolishly persist along a wrong path.

17: He who *is* soon angry acts foolishly, and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Lose your temper and you’ll always say or do the wrong thing.

18: The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Folly is the fool’s reward, but the prudent are rewarded with godly knowledge.

19: The evil bow down before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

Righteousness and goodness will ultimately win.

20: The poor *man* is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich *has* many friends.

Never show favoritism based on wealth. Very poor people are often the most godly.

21: He who despises his neighbor sins, but he who has mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.

Love toward others is the central aspect of the Christian life (I John 2:9-11). And having mercy and showing kindness toward others is the one sure path to real happiness.

22: Do not those who devise evil go astray? But mercy and truth shall be to those who think of good.

Those who are trying to make this life count for the greatest good are outgoing, loving people.

23: In all labor there is gain, but the talk of the lips *tends* only to poverty.

Even an apprentice draws a wage if he works hard. But nobody pays you for talking.

24: The crown of the wise *is* their riches; the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

Wise people can become wealthy through hard work and smart investments. But a fool gets paid the wages of a fool.

25: A true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful *witness* speaks lies.

A person who speaks the truth will deliver the falsely accused, but a deceitful person's lies help no one.

26-27: In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.

Having a *deep respect* for God is the right approach to life, which will bring confidence in everything we do—and save us from untimely death.

28: In the multitude of people *is* the king's honor, but in the lack of people *is* the destruction of the prince.

For a king to be truly great, he must have the respect of the people.

29: *He who is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding, but *he who is* hasty of spirit exalts folly.

In moments of anger, some of the stupidest decisions have been made.

30: A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones.

A wholesome, godly mindset literally adds to your physical wellbeing. Why? Because your body reacts to *everything* you think. And contentment—the opposite of envy—is a key.

31: He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honors Him has mercy upon the poor.

Our love for others is a direct reflection of our love for God (Matt. 25:40).

32: When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but the righteous, even when he is brought to death, has hope.

The wicked eventually face eternal death, but the hope of the righteous is the resurrection.

33: Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has discernment, but that which is in the midst of fools *is* made known.

Those with godly understanding can provide good counsel. But the fool blurts out everything he knows, most of which is wrong.

34: Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin *is* a reproach to any people.

Entire societies can be sinful; but a righteous nation will be exalted in the world's eyes.

35: The king's favor *is* toward a wise servant, but his wrath is *against* him who causes shame.

A good leader favors those who demonstrate wisdom; but he will not tolerate the fool who brings shame to his kingdom.

Proverbs 15

1: A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

We all face contentious situations from time to time. But the key is your presentation: speak clearly and with conviction, but also kindly, respectfully. Answering back “in kind” will only stir the pot. We are to strive to speak only in ways that encourage and edify others (Eph. 4:29-32; see Prov. 15:23 below).

2: The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness.

A wise man applies knowledge to the benefit of others. But if you want to know if a person is a fool, just listen to him for a while. It'll show.

3: The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

God is actively involved in His creation—He sees *everything* (see I Pet. 3:12; Psa. 33:14).

4: A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit.

God learns a great deal about you by what comes out of your mouth. With our words, we can encourage, teach, etc.—bring “life” to others. Or, we can be negative and hurtful, crushing someone's spirit.

5: A fool despises his father's instruction, but he who listens to correction is prudent.

Only a fool despises the advice of the very ones who are far wiser and fully dedicated to your happiness—your parents.

6: In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure, but in the revenue of the wicked *is* trouble.

Wealth itself is not evil. A righteous person may have much wealth, earned in a godly manner. But even that which an evil person has is typically obtained at someone else's expense.

7: The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the heart of the fool *is* not so.

A wise person uses his understanding to bring useful knowledge to others.

8-9: The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright *is* His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves him who pursues righteousness.

Beware of orthodox worldly religions—where the wicked *pretend* to be godly. But God takes great delight in those who approach Him with a pure heart.

10: There *is* grievous correction for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof shall die.

God is ever merciful, giving us time and space to repent. But obstinate people may need more intense correction to get them to wake up.

11: The grave and destruction *are* before the LORD—how much more the hearts of the children of men!

Death and destruction lie open before God—as do the *hearts* of all men.

12: A scorner does not love one who corrects him, nor will he go unto the wise.

An unspiritual person cannot take correction, and is often too prideful to seek help.

13: A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.

If what is going on *in our minds* is of God, it will be evident by the happiness on our faces. But sin and separation from God will bring just the opposite.

14: The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

A wise man seeks knowledge—in order to benefit others. But if you want to know if a person is a fool, just listen to him for a while. It'll soon show.

15: All the days of the afflicted *are* evil, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.

Sinners face constant evil and affliction; but the godly are always cheerful—as if at a feast!

16: Better *is* a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.

Wealth can be troublesome if it is not coupled with a right relationship with God.

17: Better *is* a dinner of vegetables where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred with it.

Love is the main item on the menu.

18: A wrathful man stirs up discord, but one slow to anger calms strife.

Being “slow to anger” is a key attribute of the wise—who work for peace by helping to *solve* problems.

19: The way of the sluggard *is* like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

A lazy person makes about as much progress as someone trying to plow through a hedge of thorns. But for the righteous, their way is open and clear.

20: A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man [in effect] despises his mother.

A wise child will be successful and stay out of trouble, bringing honor to the whole family.

21: Folly *is* joy to him who is destitute of wisdom, but a man of understanding walks uprightly.

Fools don’t understand *why* wrong is wrong; the carnal mind is against God’s way (Rom. 8:7).

22: Without counsel purposes are frustrated, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Things go wrong when you go it alone. Don’t be too proud to ask for help—then succeed.

23: A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *it is!*

A good answer—a right answer—brings joy to everyone, including the one who gave it!

24: The path of life leads upward for the wise, so that he may turn away from the pit below.

The wise follow a path that leads to life—upward, growing, improving.

25: The LORD will destroy the house of the proud, but He maintains the border of the widow.

Pride leads ultimately to one’s ruin—always. The humility of the widow is our example.

26: The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD, but the *words of* the pure *are* pleasant words.

God hates even the thoughts of the wicked, let alone what comes out of his mouth.

27: He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes shall live.

When you love money, you only end up hurting yourself *and* your family.

28: The heart of the righteous studies to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

The righteous man studies and mediates on how to give good counsel; his only desire is to help.

29: The LORD *is* far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Want God to hear your prayers? Then focus on righteousness.

30: The light of the eyes rejoices the heart; a good report makes the bones fat [healthy].

The countenance of a righteous man radiates—and righteousness leads to good health.

31-32: The ear that hearkens to the reproof of life shall remain among the wise. He who refuses instruction despises his own soul, but he who hearkens to reproof gains understanding.

Being willing to take correction—even *seek* correction—is the mark of real wisdom.

33: The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom, and before honor *is* humility.

As Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge.” This is not being terrified of God, but a deep respect and love for Him and His way. Actual *fearfulness* is harmful and something God wants to eliminate (I John 4:1819).

Proverbs 16

1: The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the LORD.

Only intimacy with God will allow Him to inspire our thinking and our conclusions.

2: All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits.

Human nature—the human heart—is utterly deceitful and cannot be trusted, cannot be known (Jer. 17:9). Paul warns that if you think “everything is okay”—*beware* (I Cor. 10:12). Sometimes we deceive ourselves into thinking that God is well pleased with us. We don’t see ourselves the way God sees us—and He constantly tests our minds.

3: Commit your works unto the LORD, and your thoughts [plans] shall be established.

Never do *anything* independent of God. Bring your relationship with God into every area of your life—into all relationships, into every decision you have to make. Only then will He guide you.

4: The LORD has made all for His own purpose; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

God has created all things for His overall purpose, for a greater good.

5: Everyone who is proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD; *though joined* hand in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

The fundamental attitude God is looking for is *humility*. A prideful heart is repulsive to God because it operates independently of Him and His grace—neither asking for forgiveness, nor appreciating forgiveness when it is granted. Pride annuls love, because it puts *self* first.

6: By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the LORD *men* turn away from evil.

God's mercy and forgiveness, coupled with an understanding of how God wants us to live, can inspire us to fight against sin and iniquity. No one hates sin more than one who has experienced God's mercy. Fearing God (see Matt. 10:28) is a good motivator to stop sinning.

7: When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

An awesome promise. Live for God, and never worry about enemies again.

8: Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.

A righteous man with a meager income will be happy; but riches with sin leads only to misery.

9: A man's heart devises his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

A man may have an idea of what he wants to accomplish, but it is God who will show him how to accomplish it. In every area of life, God wants to be intimately involved.

10: A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king; his mouth should not transgress in judgment.

God has given our leaders the responsibility to make *right* judgments for the people. Yet, how many today make such judgments unjustly—influenced by bribes and favoritism?

11: A just weight and balance *are* the LORD'S; all the weights of the bag *are* His work.

God's way is to deal honestly and fairly with others. There should be one standard of ethics.

12: *It is* an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for the throne *is* established by righteousness.

Wicked, self-focused rulers are a disgrace to God. In ancient Israel, God had the kings obtain their own copy of the “book of the Law”—and they were expected to read it! (Deut. 17:18-20).

13: Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is right.

A righteous king places great value on honest, righteous counsel. He has the wisdom to see that such people are an asset.

14: The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it.

When a king becomes angry, people often die; but a wise person knows how to calm such a king.

15: In the light of the king’s countenance *is* life, and his favor *is* like a cloud of the latter rain.

Try to remain on the “good side” of rulers; having their favor is priceless.

16: How much better *it is* to get wisdom than gold, and to choose understanding rather than silver!

Pursue what matters in life—wisdom, understanding, righteousness. Money will not satisfy.

17: The way of the upright *is* to turn away from evil; he who keeps his way preserves his soul.

Be careful to keep away from anything evil; “guard your way” of life—and live!

18: Pride *goes* before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

If you go through life full of pride and arrogance—you *are* going to fall.

19: *It is better to be* of a humble spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Learn to be happy with less; be willing to take the “back seat.” Then God will bless you. But having a share of wealth among the wicked will ultimately lead to misery and ruin.

20: He who handles a matter wisely shall find good; and whoever trusts in the LORD, happy *is* he.

If you do it *God’s way*, things will ultimately turn out right.

21: The wise in heart shall be called prudent, and the sweetness of the lips increases learning.

The wise know what to say at the right time. The “sweetness” of their lips educates others.

22: Understanding *is* a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

Good and right understanding is a blessing to one's life; but teaching fools is useless.

23: The heart of the wise teaches his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

Having wisdom will allow you to teach and persuade others of God's way.

24: Pleasant words *are like* a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Every word that comes from your mouth should edify, encourage, and uplift.

25: There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

Any way of life outside of God's way, even if it seems right, will lead to death.

26: The appetite of a laboring man works for him, for his hunger urges him on.

No one wants to stay hungry! So work hard and you'll eat!

27: An ungodly man digs up evil, and his lips *are* like a burning fire.

Gossipmongers love to “get the dirt” on people and spread it. Makes them feel big.

28: A perverse man causes strife, and a whisperer separates chief friends.

Gossip causes nothing but harm—and can ruin great friendships.

29-30: A violent man lures his neighbor and leads him into a way *that is* not good. He shuts his eyes to devise perverse things; and moving his lips, he brings evil to pass.

Evil people love to draw others into their wickedness.

31: The gray head *is* a crown of glory *if* it is found in the way of righteousness.

Growing into old age with righteousness is honorable, and commands respect (Lev. 19:32).

32: He who is slow to anger *is* better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city.

The greatest control is *self control*—to gauge what one feels, thinks, says.

33: The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it *is* from the LORD.

The priesthood at times used *lots* to discern God's will. The key is that God controlled the lots. Today, we do our best to understand and follow God's will—and leave the outcome to Him.

Proverbs 17

1: Better *is* a dry piece of bread, and quietness with it, than a house full of sacrifices *with* fighting.

Stress and contentiousness in a home destroy everything God wants for us humans. Indeed, He intends that we dwell together in peace. As this proverb indicates, a simple, meager life with peace is better than extravagance with contention. Similarly, it is better to dwell alone on the housetop than to live inside with a brawling woman (Prov. 25:24).

2: A wise servant shall have rule over a son who causes shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

It is tragic when a son, an heir, causes his father shame. A crafty servant will seek to rise above that son—to replace him in the eyes of the father.

3: The refining pot *is* for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tries the hearts.

The purest silver and gold can only be obtained through the crucible of intense heat. God is always testing our faith and character, putting us through trials and tests to “refine” us to a more pure state. See Psalms 26:2, where David asks God to test him, to prove him. See James 1:2-5, where we are encouraged to be joyful in trials and tests, letting them have their “perfect work.”

4: A wicked doer gives heed to false lips, *and* a liar gives ear to an evil tongue.

Evil gossipers and liars love to listen to false rumors and lies!

5: Whoever scorns the poor reviles his Maker; he who is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

Always open your hand to the poor, giving what you can. Never mock or belittle them for their pitiful condition. If you do, you insult God! Never gloat at others’ misfortune.

6: Children’s children *are* the crown of old men, and the glory of children *are* their fathers.

Enjoying one’s grandchildren is like a “crowning achievement” of life. And every father should be a hero and role model in the eyes of his child.

7: Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool; much less are lying lips fitting for a prince.

These are paradoxes: A fool should not be so pretentious as to use refined speech; and a ruler over the people must never be found a liar.

8: A gift *is* like a precious stone in the eyes of him who has it; wherever he turns, he prospers.

A special gift received with genuine appreciation will be treated like a rare treasure.

9: He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter alienates friends.

Out of love, a wise and godly man will try to find a way to cover up another's sin or mistake; an evil fool, however, will seek to expose others' mistakes—even if it harms relationships.

10: A reproof enters more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.

Correct a wise man, and he grows; but you cannot change a fool even with harsh punishment!

11: An evil one seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Those given to evil and rebellion will eventually be dealt with (see Num. 32:23).

12: Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly.

No one wants to deal with an angry bear. But a fool given to folly is likewise dangerous, causing much harm to everyone around him.

13: Whoever rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Paying back *evil* to those who have done good to you—a sure way to being cursed by God!

14: The beginning of strife *is like* letting out water; therefore drop the dispute before a quarrel breaks out.

Don't allow a disagreement to become a quarrel; identify the warning signs and walk away.

15: He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the just, even both of them are an abomination to the LORD.

This is quite common today, where people get *good* and *evil* mixed up (see Isa. 5:20) because of false teachers and corrupt leaders.

16: Why *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, since *he has* no heart *for it*?

Formal education for a fool is a waste of money and time. It will not profit him.

17: A [true] friend loves at all times, and [yet] a brother is born for adversity.

Many have experienced this: a genuine friend who stands by you, while a sibling betrays you.

18: A man void of understanding shakes hands *in a pledge*; he becomes surety in the presence of his friend.

A fool void of common sense hastily enters into contracts he cannot honor.

19: He who loves transgression loves strife; he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.

Sin only causes strife; and promoting yourself is a sure path to ruin.

20: He who has a perverse heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into mischief.

With their cynical outlook, fools with perverse minds have difficulty seeing good in anything.

21: He who begets a fool *does it* to his sorrow; the father of a fool has no joy.

A foolish son brings great sorrow to his parents.

22: A merry heart does good *like* a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

Being negative is damaging to one's health; but a happy, optimistic outlook builds health.

23: A wicked *man* takes a bribe out of the bosom to pervert the ways of justice.

Taking bribes destroys a just system; the corruption affects every part of society.

24: Wisdom *is* before him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool *are* on the ends of the earth.

Wisdom involves understanding what is truly important in life; but fools think unrealistically.

25: A foolish son *is* a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

A foolish son brings great sorrow to his parents.

26: *It is* not good to punish the righteous, *nor* to strike princes for their uprightness.

In today's upside-down world, *good* is often punished—while evil goes unpunished!

27: He who has knowledge uses few words; a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

With deliberate brevity, a wise man *says what he means* and *means what he says*.

28: Even a fool, when he is silent, is counted wise; *and* he who shuts his lips *is counted as* a man of understanding.

People will assume you are educated and mature if you will just *keep quiet*. But a fool quickly gives himself away just by opening his mouth.

Proverbs 18

1: He who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rails against all sound wisdom.

“Loners” are typically self indulgent, which is contrary to sound-mindedness.

2: A fool has no delight in understanding, but only that his heart may discover itself.

A fool has no use for true knowledge—but he doesn’t mind telling you what he thinks!

3: When the wicked comes, contempt also comes, and with dishonor comes disgrace.

Wickedness is universally held in contempt; and dishonor caused by sin brings shame.

4: The words of a man’s mouth *are like* deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is *like* a flowing stream.

Wisdom runs deep in some people, flowing out like a spring of refreshing water!

5: *It is* not good to favor the person of the wicked, nor to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

God is *always impartial* in judgment: right is right, wrong is wrong. We must do likewise.

6-7: A fool’s lips enter into argument, and his mouth calls for strokes. A fool’s mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul.

Fools often create squabbles and strife; it’s like they are just begging for a beating! Moreover, a fool’s mouth can bring about his own ruin, as surely as a bird is trapped in a snare.

8: The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

No one likes a gossip. Words *can* hurt, like wounds to the soul.

9: Also he who is slack in his work is a brother to him who is a great waster.

Being a lazy slacker on the job is akin to being wasteful. But *diligence* is godly (Rom. 12:11).

10: The name of the LORD *is* [like] a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

God’s “name” equates to His authority and power; thus, for the righteous, He is a place of safety, protection, comfort. See Psalms 61:1-4.

11: The rich man’s wealth *is* his strong city, and as a high wall in his own conceit.

A rich man puts his faith in his money, fancying himself as a city protected by high walls.

12: Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honor *is* humility.

Unchecked pride will eventually lead to ruin, but genuine humility is the key to God's favor. Always remember, *God is in charge of rugs!*

13: He who answers a matter before he hears it, it *is* folly and shame to him.

Nothing is more foolish than trying to give an answer when you don't even understand the question! Wisdom says: *be quiet and listen, understand, then speak.*

14: The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a broken spirit who can bear?

It is one thing to endure an illness or disability; but *discouragement* can utterly destroy.

15: The heart of the prudent gets knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

Learn and grow in wisdom. You will not only be successful, you will please God.

16: A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men.

In this world, sometimes it takes a well-placed "gift" or favor to get an audience with someone important. But don't confuse this with *bribery*.

17: The one who is first in his own cause *seems* just, but his neighbor comes and searches him out.

Any story sounds true—until someone tells the other side. Get the facts, and look at both sides.

18: The lot causes arguments to cease and decides between the mighty.

Sometimes, a simple "coin toss" is all that is needed to end a dispute.

19: A brother offended *is harder to win than* a strong city; and *their* disagreements *are* like the bars of a fortress.

Offenses can go beyond hurt feelings; there may be a sense of betrayal. Patching things up can be difficult, but not impossible.

20: A man's belly [conscience] shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; he shall be satisfied with the product of his lips.

A wise person will say the right things—and be content that he did what was right.

21: Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue, and those who love it shall eat the fruit of it.

Teachers, preachers, judges, witnesses—our words have consequences! And if you're a big talker, remember this: you will eat your words!

22: *Whoever* finds a wife finds a good *thing* and obtains favor from the LORD.

God created marriage, and the woman was designed as a helpmeet for the man. What a great example of God's wisdom and favor!

23: The poor entreats requests, but the rich answers roughly.

The poor man humbly expresses his needs—showing courtesy and appreciation; but rich people don't care if they are offensive.

24: A man *who has* friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Want friends? Then *be* friendly. Some friendships are stronger than even family relationships.

Proverbs 19

1: Better *is* the poor who walks in his integrity than he who *is* perverse in his lips and is a fool.

It is universally understood that even a poor man, if he lives with integrity and honesty, is more desirable than a foul-mouthed fool.

2: For a man to be without knowledge, it is not good, and he who is impetuous sins.

Enthusiasm without proper knowledge is not good, and hastiness will get you into trouble.

3: The foolishness of man perverts his way, and his heart frets against the LORD.

The foolishness of a man will lead him down crooked paths—all in opposition to God.

4: Wealth makes many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend.

For now, it seems the wealthy run the world—have all they want, even at the expense of the poor. But God always has the last word.

5: A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he who pours out lies shall not escape.

If lie under oath, you will get caught and punished; and if you are chronic liar, your lies will eventually catch up with you.

6: Many will beg the favor of a ruler, and everyone *is* a friend to a man who gives gifts.

Asking for favor is not wrong—if you need help; but beware of those who give out gifts—for there will be a day of reckoning.

7: All the brothers of the poor man hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him? He pursues *them* with words, *yet* they are nowhere to be found.

Avoiding someone because they are poor is grievous in God’s eyes. Better to offer them help.

8: He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding shall find good.

Wisdom will do your soul well: protect you, provide for you, enhance your health, etc.

9: A false witness shall not be unpunished, and one speaking lies shall perish.

If lie under oath, you will get caught and punished; and if you are deliberate liar, your lies will eventually be your ruin.

10: Living in luxury is not becoming for a fool, much less for a slave to have rule over princes.

Fools cannot manage wealth or luxury; they are wasteful and unappreciative.

11: The discretion of a man puts off his anger; and *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man with integrity will defer his anger as he kindly overlooks an offense.

12: The king’s wrath *is* like the roaring of a lion, but his favor *is* like dew on the grass.

You always want to be on the good side of the king!

13: A foolish son *is* calamity to his father, and a contentious wife *is* a never-ending dripping.

Two things are most grievous: a son who brings shame to his father, and a nagging wife!

14: Houses and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers, and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.

You may inherit land, property, and money; but only God can help you find the right mate.

15: Laziness throws one into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

God is big on working hard, earning your way; but He despises idleness and laziness.

16: He who keeps the commandment [of God] keeps his own soul; he who is careless in his ways shall [prematurely] die.

Want to preserve your own life? Follow God’s teachings, and don’t let careless be your ruin!

17: He who has pity upon the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward his good deed to him.

God promises to bless those who care for the poor—for it is as if we are caring for God Himself!

18: Chasten your son while there is hope, but do not set your heart on his destruction.

Discipline is good for young people—but be sensible and balanced about it!

19: A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment; for if you deliver *him*, you must do it yet again.

Those who are impulsive and hot tempered are headed for trouble. They seem to never learn—especially when they keep getting bailed out!

20: Hear advice and receive instruction, so that you may be wise in your latter end.

Listen and learn now; then, when you are older, wisdom will be your greatest companion.

21: *There are* many purposes in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the LORD shall stand.

It is good to have plans. But ultimately God's will is all that matters.

22: The desire of a man *is* his kindness, and a poor man *is* better than a liar.

A man's kindness is what makes him desirable and attractive.

23: The fear of the LORD *tends* to life, and the one who has it shall dwell satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

Proper fear—respect, reverence—of God leads to innumerable blessings—and life!

24: A lazy one puts his hand in a dish, and he will not raise it to his mouth again.

Are some people really too lazy to even feed themselves?

25: Strike a scorner, and the simple will beware; reprove one who has understanding, *and* he will gain knowledge.

If you are wise, you will always learn something when you are handed corrected.

26: He who assaults his father *and* chases away *his* mother *is* a son who causes shame and brings reproach.

This kind of son will bring nothing but grief to his family.

27: My son, when you cease to hear instruction, you *only* go astray from the words of knowledge.

Never stop learning, listening to instruction. Otherwise you will eventually go astray.

28: An ungodly witness scorns justice, and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.

False witnesses hinder justice and make a mockery of the courts. Wicked men *feed on* evil.

29: Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the backs of fools.

No one gets away with sin for long. Judgment and punishment will always find fools.

Proverbs 20

1: Wine *is* a mocker; strong drink *is* raging; and whoever is deceived by it is not wise.

Like most vices, alcohol abuse often results from the *deception* that it can make one's troubles disappear. It is most unwise to ever go down that path.

2: The dreaded wrath of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own soul.

The last thing you want to do is get on the wrong side of those in authority!

3: *It is* an honor for a man to cease from strife, but every fool will rail on.

An honorable person, who is spiritually mature, will not be provoked to strife. He knows when to depart. But a fool's emotions are out of control, leading him quickly into strife.

4: The lazy one will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* he shall beg in harvest [time] and *have* nothing.

Lazy people will find all manner of excuses as to why work cannot be done.

5: A plan in the heart of man *is like* deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Making important plans is best done with the mentoring of good, upright friends.

6: Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find?

Everybody wants to be thought of as "good"; but real faithfulness is hard to come by.

7: A righteous man who walks in his integrity, his children *are* blessed after him.

Righteousness before God will lead to blessings for you *and* for your children.

8: A king who sits in the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes.

If you are wicked, it is natural to be fearful of those in authority.

9: Who can say, “I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin”?

A rhetorical question. Answer: no one. Only God can make this happen.

10: Different kinds of weights *and* different kinds of measures, both *are* an abomination to the LORD.

Using inconsistent weights is intentionally cheating others. And don't think God won't notice!

11: Even a child is known by his own doings, whether his work is pure and whether *it is* right.

If this is true, and it is, then *how much more* are adults known and judged by their actions?

12: The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made both of them.

God gave use ears to listen with and eyes to see with—so be quiet and learn something!

13: Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes [and get out of bed!] and you shall be satisfied with bread.

Laziness is a habit; so is being industrious.

14: “*It is bad! It is bad!*” says the buyer; but when he has gone his way, then he boasts.

Attention-getting vanity lurks in the heart of every man.

15: There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

Real wealth is when your lips can pass on godly understanding.

16: Take the garment of him who [foolishly] is guaranty *for* a stranger, and take a pledge from him [who does likewise] for a strange woman.

Getting involved in other people's misguided financial deals is not wise (Prov. 6:1-5; 11:15).

17: Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Deception is satisfying to one's vanity, but your conscience will afflict you later.

18: *Every* purpose is established by counsel, and [only] with good advice make war.

Got big plans? Get good advice *first*—then proceed.

19: A talebearer goes about revealing secrets; therefore do not mix with him who flatters with his lips.

You have to know who you can trust, as gossip and tale bearing are rampant among men.

20: Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in deep darkness.

An ominous warning for those who would show utter contempt toward their parents.

21: An inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning, even the end of it shall not be blessed.

Easy money isn't worth much—and God's blessing will not go with it.

22: Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait on the LORD, and He will save you.

You never need to strike back; God will deal with those who show you evil.

23: Different kinds of weights *are* an abomination to the LORD, and a false scale *is* not good.

Using variable weights is intentionally cheating others. And God will take notice!

24: Man's steps *are* of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

God is in control of everything—which is how we should view our lives (James 4:13-15).

25: *It is* a snare *to* a man to say rashly, "It is a holy thing," and after making his vow to reconsider it.

Your word is your bond. You must stand by whatever comes out of your mouth.

26: A wise king scatters the wicked and rolls a threshing wheel over them.

Good leaders know how to keep the bad folks away.

27: The spirit of man *is* the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Man is physical, yet we are intensely *spiritual* as well. And God weighs every single thought.

28: Love and truth preserve the king, and his throne is upheld by mercy.

Righteous leaders do well. And their ability to show *mercy* is key.

29: The glory of young men *is* their strength; and the beauty of old men *is* the gray head.

This is what people take pride in—strength when they are young, and wisdom when they are old.

30: The stripes that wound purge away evil; and yea, strokes [of correction] cleanse the innermost parts *of one's being*.

Pain and suffering are part of growth, and are necessary if one is to achieve godly wisdom.

Proverbs 21

1: The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD *as* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He will.

God ultimately rules over all kings and all kingdoms (Daniel 4:32; John 19:11).

2: Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, but the LORD ponders the hearts.

We all think we are in the right, but God sees and considers everything. See Psalm 33:13-15.

3: To do righteousness and justice *is* more pleasing to the LORD than sacrifice.

To God, the ultimate sacrifice is to obey and do what pleases Him—to observe the “weightier matters” of the Law (Matt. 23:23).

4: A high look, a proud heart, *and* [even] the plowing of the wicked *are* sin.

One's *plowing* represents his prosperity—so even the prosperity of the proud displeases God.

5: The plans of the diligent *tend* only to plenty, but everyone *who is* hasty, only to poverty.

Diligence and hard work will always pay off, but impatience can lead to disaster.

6: The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro by those who seek death.

Profit acquired through deception will be cursed; you are courting disaster and death.

7: The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them because they refuse to do what is just.

Thieves refuse to work for what they need, and their way of life will lead to their destruction.

8: The way of a guilty man *is* perverted; but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

Those who walk a crooked path know guilt; those who do what is right are pure.

9: *It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than to share a house with a quarrelsome woman.

God desires that we live together in peace and harmony; otherwise we must separate.

10: The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.

It is universally true that evil people are despised by their neighbors.

11: When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise; and when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.

Pay attention when someone is corrected—as it could apply to you too!

12: The righteous wisely considers the house of the wicked, *but God* overthrows the wicked for *their* wickedness.

It is prudent to consider the life of the wicked man—to help you avoid his ways.

13: Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

What goes around comes around. Help those who need help, and you too will get the help you need. See Proverbs 19:17.

14: A gift in secret pacifies anger, and a present in the bosom quiets strong wrath.

The wise know how to win another's favor—and thus defuse problems.

15: *It is* joy to the righteous to do justice, but ruin to the workers of iniquity.

If you do what is just and right, it will bring you joy; but evil will always bring destruction.

16: The man who wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Straying from the path of righteousness puts you in the company of those headed for destruction.

17: He who loves pleasure *shall be* a poor man; he who loves wine and oil shall not be rich.

Living for hedonistic, physical pleasures will cost you—physically and spiritually.

18: The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

Sometimes God uses the calamity of the wicked to deliver the righteous.

19: *It is* better to dwell in the wilderness than with a quarrelsome and angry woman.

God desires that we live together in peace and harmony; otherwise we must separate.

20: Precious treasure and oil are in the home of the wise, but a foolish man devours it.

A wise man appreciates the blessings of God; but fools squander what they have.

21: He who follows after righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor.

Living God's way of life brings *innumerable* blessings!

22: A wise one scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold of its hope.

A graphic depiction of how a wise man diligently overcomes the obstacles of life.

23: Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

Just keeping your mouth shut can prevent all kinds of trouble.

24: A proud and haughty scorner *is* his name who acts with arrogant rage.

Pride, haughtiness, a bad temper—these lead to all kinds of trouble.

25-26: The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to work. He covets greedily all the day long, but the righteous gives and spares not.

Slothfulness leads to deprivation and the coveting of what you are too lazy to work for (see II Thess. 3:10). However, those who are industrious have extra to share.

27: The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to God; how much more *when* he brings it with a wicked mind?

What is worse than an offering brought by an ungodly person? His wicked attitude.

28: A false witness shall perish, but the man who listens *to truth* will speak unchallenged.

False witnesses will ultimately perish, but those who adhere to the truth will prevail.

29: A wicked man hardens his face, but *as for* the upright, he establishes his way.

The heart of the wicked grows harder, but the righteous are well established in their way.

30: *There is* no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Plans against God can never succeed.

31: The horse *is* prepared for the day of battle, yet victory is from the LORD.

Always do the very best you can, then trust God with the results (see Psalms 20:7; 118:8).

Proverbs 22

1: A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favor rather than silver or gold.

A good name—*reputation*—means everything. It represents you in every way.

2: The rich and poor meet together, *but* the LORD *is* the maker of them all.

All of mankind are equal in respect to creation and common nature—we all have the same problems, and the same path to salvation.

3: A prudent *one* foresees the evil and hides himself, but the thoughtless plow ahead and are punished.

It is wise to understand the times and circumstances in which one lives. Trouble can be anticipated and avoided. But the foolish just carry on without a care—and they pay.

4: By humility *and* the fear of the LORD *are* riches and honor and life.

Humility—knowing one’s true place in life—and fearing God will provide you with all you will every need—plus honor and eternal life.

5: Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the perverse; he who guards himself shall be far from them.

Wicked people seem to always be up against some kind of difficulty. It’s actually the law of cause and effect at work.

6: Train up a child in the way he should go; and [even] when he is old, he will not depart from it.

With diligence, children can be molded and trained in godliness. And it will last a lifetime.

7: The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower *is* slave to the lender.

A reality of fiscal life: if you are poor, you are at the mercy of the rich, those who loan money.

8: He who sows iniquity shall reap vanity, and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Sinfulness will bring vanity—nothingness, emptiness.

9: He who has a bountiful eye shall be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor.

In Hebrew, having a “bountiful eye” means having compassion, a willingness to help. You are a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7). And all such will be blessed by God.

10: Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, quarreling and abuse shall cease.

If you want peace, shun critical squabblers who only stir up division.

11: He who loves pureness of heart, on whose lips is grace, the king *shall be* his friend.

Being kind and of a pure, child-like heart will attract the best kind of people.

12: The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and He overthrows the words of the transgressor.

God is the source of true knowledge, and everything contrary to God’s way will come to nothing.

13: The lazy *one* says, “*There is* a lion outside; I shall be killed in the streets.”

People who don’t want to work fabricate all kinds of wild excuses.

14: The mouth of wanton women *is* a deep pit; he who is cursed by the LORD shall fall therein.

Giving in to the lures of an immoral woman is a sure path to destruction.

15: Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child, *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Children naturally want to do foolish things. They must be disciplined to make smart choices.

16: He who oppresses the poor to multiply *riches* for himself, *and* he who gives to the rich, only *comes* to poverty.

People in this world acquire wealth by exploiting the poor. But their wealth will ultimately fail.

17-21: Bow down your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge—for *it is* a pleasant thing if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you this day, even to you. Have I not written to you excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make you know the sureness of the words of truth, so that you might bring back the words of truth to those who send you?

Wisdom is seeking out and then living out *true* knowledge—which only comes from God.

22-23: Do not rob the poor because he *is* poor, nor oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the LORD will plead their cause and despoil those who plunder them.

Evil people seek to exploit the poor, the weak, the disadvantaged. But God is watching!

24-25: Make no friendship with an angry man; and you shall not go with a furious man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Stay away from certain kinds of people—like those given to a bad temper!

26-27: Be not one of those who strike hands, or of those who are sureties for debts. If you have nothing to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?

Be careful about hastily making deals; you could get taken!

28: Do not remove the old landmark which your fathers have set.

In Hebrew culture, it was extreme dishonesty to attempt to alter property lines.

29: Do you see a man diligent in his work? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure *men*.

A person who is diligent will stand before professionals—renown in their field.

Proverbs 23

This chapter summarizes some of the things a father most wants his son to remember. Likewise, it reveals things that God, as a loving Father, wants to protect us from.

1-3: When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what *is* before you; and put a knife to your throat if you *are* a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they *are* the bread of lies.

Hobnobbing with the rich and powerful might be fun, but you *will be harmed* by it.

4-5: Do not weary yourself to be rich; cease from your own wisdom. When your eyes look upon it, *it is gone!* For surely *riches* make wings for themselves, and they fly *into* heaven like an eagle.

Don't make being rich your goal. The things of this world are but vanity—and cannot make you happy. Read James 5:1-3.

6-8: Do not eat the bread of *him who has* an evil eye, nor desire his dainty foods. For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he. “Eat and drink,” he says to you, but his heart *is* not with you. The morsel *which* you have eaten, you shall vomit up, and spoil your pleasant words.

Having an “evil eye” in Hebrew means to be selfish, uncaring. This verse simply means we are not to fellowship with or make friendships with worldly, carnal people. They are not like us.

9: Do not speak in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words.

You cannot teach fools. So don't "cast your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6).

10-11: Do not remove the old landmarks, and do not enter into the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer *is* mighty; He shall plead their cause with you.

Removing landmarks—essentially stealing land—and taking from orphans or widows is really low. God will deal with you.

12: Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to the words of knowledge.

Always be willing to learn. *Right* knowledge is empowering.

13-14: Do not withhold correction from a child, for *if* you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from the grave.

Discipline is a key component of childrearing.

15-16: My son [or daughter], if your heart is wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my heart shall rejoice when your lips speak right things.

Nothing makes parents happier than wise, upright children.

17-18: Do not let your heart envy sinners, but *be* in the fear of the LORD all the day long; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope shall not be cut off.

Ultimately, God will bring your every thought, word, and action into judgment. There *is* a "hereafter"—and it hinges on that judgment.

19: My son, hear and be wise, and guide your heart in the way.

Plan your future—don't just "let life happen." Learn God's way, and pursue it relentlessly.

20-21: Do not be among those who drink much wine, among gluttons of flesh; for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and sleepiness shall clothe [such] *a man* with rags.

Gluttony and abusing alcohol will lead you to poverty—as will "sleepiness" or laziness.

22: Harken to your father who begat you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Number one rule for a happy life: listen to and obey your parents.

23: Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* [get] wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Pursue right knowledge and godly wisdom above all else.

24-25: The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise *child* shall have joy from him. Your father and your mother shall be glad, and she who bore you shall rejoice.

Nothing makes a proud parent like wise, upright children.

26-28: My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. For a harlot *is* a deep ditch, and a wanton woman *is* a narrow pit. She also lies in wait as *for* prey and increases the transgressors among men.

Almost nothing is more damaging than sexual sin. Sexual addiction is a deep pit—very difficult to overcome. And today especially, sexual temptation “lies in wait” around every corner.

29-30: Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has fighting? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who stay long at the wine, those who go to seek mixed wine.

Alcohol abuse brings all kinds of sorrow and woe. Countless lives are destroyed by its lure.

31-35: Do not look upon the wine when it is red, when it gives its color in the cup, *when* it goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like an asp and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall look upon strange things and your heart shall speak perverse things. Yea, you shall be as one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or as one who lies upon the top of a mast, *saying*, “They struck me; I was not hurt; they beat me, *but* I did not feel it. When I awaken, I will seek it yet again.”

Alcohol can greatly distort your perception of reality. And after the “drug” wears off, your problems are still there. Ultimately, it stings like a viper—leading to destruction.

Proverbs 24

1-2: Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them. For their heart studies destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

It is easy to be attracted to worldliness—but don’t fall into that trap. You will reap bitterness.

3-4: Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms shall be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

Hard work and good advice yield great things. But remember that God is the source of true wisdom (James 1:5) and true success (Psa. 37:5).

5-6: A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increases [in] strength. For by wise counsel you shall make your war, and in a multitude of *wise* counselors *there is* safety.

Never underestimate the value of good counsel.

7: Wisdom *is* too high for a fool; he does not open his mouth in the gate.

Godly wisdom is over the head of the carnally minded; he brings nothing to the conversation.

8-9: He who plots to do evil shall be called a master of devious thoughts. The thought of foolishness *is* sin, and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

Though the wicked try to be sneaky, people see them for what they are.

10: *If* you faint in the day of adversity, your strength *is* small.

Some people cannot deal with challenges and difficulty. They lack internal fortitude.

11-12: Rescue those being drawn to death, and hold back those *who are* stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know it,” does not He who searches the heart consider *it*? And the Keeper of your soul, does He *not* know? And does He *not* repay to every man according to his works?

Like it or not, we are our brothers’ keeper. Never ignore someone in need—because God sees everything and will hold you accountable. And God knows when you pretend to not see the brother’s need. He will repay according to your actions.

13-14: My son, eat honey because *it is* good; and the honeycomb *is* sweet to your palate. So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* to your soul; when you have found it, then there shall be a reward, and your hope shall not be cut off.

Godly wisdom and knowledge are as refreshing as the sweetest treat.

15-16: O wicked *man*, do not lie in ambush against the dwelling of the righteous; do not spoil his resting place. For a righteous one falls seven times, and rises up again; but the wicked shall fall into evil.

Plotting against godly people is like plotting against God. They have their troubles too, but God always delivers them. The wicked, however, will come to their end.

17-18: Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles—lest the LORD see, and it displease Him, and He turns away His wrath from him.

Even though we want to be delivered from our oppressors, never gloat over their demise. God is always watching and judging you.

19-20: Do not fret yourself because of evil men, nor be envious of the wicked. For there shall not be a reward to the evil man, [and] the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Don’t envy what the worldly have or worry over their success. They will soon come to nothing.

21-22: My son, fear the LORD and the king; *and* do not fellowship with those who are given to change. For their trouble shall rise suddenly, and who knows the ruin of them both?

Fear and honor God and respect the righteous king, but avoid fools who are rushing to ruin.

23-25: These things also *are* for the wise: To have respect of persons in judgment *is* not good. He who says to the wicked, “You *are* righteous”—the people shall curse him and nations shall abhor him. But to those who rebuke *him* [the wicked], it shall be a delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

Exercise godly judgment by having a clear understanding of what is good and what is evil.

26: He shall kiss the lips of him who gives a right answer.

A right answer is like good counsel—it always makes things better.

27: Prepare your work outside, and make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterwards build your house.

It is basic wisdom to establish yourself financially *first*—then build a home and family.

28-29: Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, nor deceive with your lips. Do not say, “I will do so to him as he has done to me; I will give to the man according to his work.”

Retribution is God’s business—never yours.

30-34: I went by the field of the lazy man and by the vineyard of the man without understanding—and, behold, it was all grown over with thorns, *and* nettles had covered the face of it, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw *and* considered *it* well; I looked upon *it* and I received instruction. *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down; then your poverty comes stalking, and your wants like an armed man.

This is what laziness and neglect will bring you—*poverty*.

Proverbs 25

1: These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

The remaining chapters contain proverbs collected under King Hezekiah, and were added as a sort of supplement. Most are attributed to Solomon.

2: The glory of God *is* to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings *is* to search out a matter.

In Romans 11 Paul reminds us of both the *depth* and *richness* of God’s wisdom and knowledge. His judgments are deemed *unsearchable*, His ways past finding out (verse 33). Yet “searching out” God’s wisdom, His mind, is the most exciting undertaking a man can know!

3: The heavens for height, and the earth for depth, but the heart of kings *is* without searching.

Just as the heavens and the depths of the oceans are beyond our understanding, no one can truly know the mind and heart of a righteous king.

4-5: Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner. Take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

Nations can only thrive permanently under righteous kings.

6-7: Do not put yourself forth in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great. For *it is* better that it should be said to you, “Come up here,” than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince whom your eyes have seen.

Take the “lower seat” of humility; then you will be exalted in due time (see Luke 14:7-11).

8-10: Do not go forth quickly to fight, lest *you know not* what to do in the end of it when your neighbor has put you to shame. Debate your cause with your neighbor, and do not reveal a secret of another, lest he who hears *it* put you to shame, and your evil reputation has no end.

Always deal *privately* in personal conflicts; revealing someone else’s sins is a grave mistake.

11-12: A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. As a ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprover upon a hearing ear.

It takes wisdom and thoughtfulness to say the right thing at the right time.

13: Like cold snow in the time of harvest, *so is* a faithful messenger to his senders, *for* he refreshes his master’s soul.

Faithfulness in any endeavor will always win you favor.

14: A man boasting himself in a false gift [promise] *is like* clouds and wind, but no rain.

Always deliver what you promise, being true to your word.

15: By *being* patient a ruler is won over, and a soft tongue breaks the bone.

Deal with people respectfully and sincerely. Harshness and impatience never work.

16: Have you found honey? Eat only as much as is enough for you, lest you be filled with it and vomit it up.

Moderation is the key to so much of life.

17: Withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you.

Know when to go home and never wear out your welcome.

18: A man who bears false witness against his neighbor *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow

Bearing false witness can cause incalculable damage and injury!

19: Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth or a foot out of joint.

Never get into a position of having to rely on an unfaithful servant. You'll kick yourself later.

20: As he who takes away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon soda, *so is* he who sings songs to a heavy heart.

Learn to say the right thing at the right time; learn to recognize what people actually need.

21-22: If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For you shall heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward you.

Your enemy will be completely caught off guard by your generosity—and will see that you are the better person.

23: As the north wind brings rain, so *does* an angry countenance [bring] a backbiting tongue.

If you go around with a scowl on your face, don't be surprised when others respond harshly.

24: It *is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than to share a house with a contentious woman.

God wants us to live at peace with one another; but sometimes, separation is necessary.

25: *Like* cold waters to a thirsty soul, *so is* good news from a far country.

Good news makes the heart glad—and the Gospel should satisfy our deepest hunger.

26: A righteous man who falters before the wicked is like a murky spring and a polluted well.

Be clear-cut in what you stand for—and don't back down. Otherwise, you're useless!

27: *It is* not good to eat much honey; nor *is it* glory *for men* to seek their own glory.

Too much honey will make you sick; likewise, pride and vanity are nauseating.

28: He who *has* no rule over his own spirit *is like a* broken down city without a wall.

When the city walls go down, the bad guys get in. If you let your mind get like that, any vile idea or thought can get in and lead you to ruin. Build a wall around your mind!

Proverbs 26

1: As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor *is* not becoming for a fool.

Nothing is more incongruous than honor and praise for a fool.

2: As the bird [comes] by wandering, as the swallow [comes] by flying, so the curse without cause shall not come.

Everything is cause and effect, “sow and reap”—so take responsibility instead of blaming others.

3: A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the fool’s back.

A fool always has to learn the hard way.

4-5: Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, so that he may not be wise in his own conceit.

Properly “answering a fool” requires godly wisdom. There is a time to ignore him; but there is also a time to rightly put him in his place.

6: He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off the feet *and* drinks down damage.

Never trust a fool with serious business.

7: As the legs of the lame hang limp, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.

Lacking even basic comprehension, parables and wise sayings are lost on fools.

8: As he who ties [binds up] a stone in a sling, so *is* he who gives honor to a fool.

A sling is useless if the stone becomes bound up. Likewise, honor given to a fool is meaningless.

9: As a thorn goes up into the hand of a drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.

Parables and wise sayings are lost on fools.

10: The great *God* who formed all *things* both rewards the fool and rewards transgressors.

God sees everything and rewards all men as they deserve.

11: As a dog returns to its vomit, *so* a fool returns to his own folly.

Such is the nature of bad habits, wrong ways of thinking, and addictions.

12: Do you see a man wise in his own conceit? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.

Fools are bad enough. But an arrogant know-it-all is worse.

13-16: The lazy one says, “*There is* a lion in the way; yea a lion *is* in the streets.” As the door turns upon its hinges, so *does* the lazy man turn upon his bed. The lazy man hides his hand in *his* bosom; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth. The sluggard *is* wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a reason.

Laziness is a serious problem for many. They will find all kinds of excuses for avoiding work.

17-19: He who passes by and meddles with strife not his own *is like* one who takes a dog by the ears, or like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death. So *is* the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “Am I not *only* joking?”

Common sense says don’t get involved in other people’s arguments. You’ll get bitten.

20-21: Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where *there is* no talebearer, the quarreling ceases. As charcoal to burning embers, and wood *is* to fire, so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

The way to stop gossip is to stop talking. Put the fire out by starving it.

22: The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Words *do* hurt—sometimes deeply.

23: Burning lips and a wicked heart *are like* a broken piece of pottery with silver dross.

One given to gossip is worthless—like a piece of broken pottery covered with fake silver.

24-26: He who hates *and* disguises it with his lips stores up deceit within himself. When he makes his voice gracious, do not believe him, for seven hateful things *are* in his heart. *He whose* hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be revealed before the congregation.

This passage describes the miserable state of people who are inwardly full of hatred but who are able to cleverly appear otherwise. Learn to identify and avoid them.

27: Whoever digs a pit shall fall into it; and he who rolls a stone, it shall turn back upon him.

Everything in life is “cause and effect.” You reap exactly what you sow.

28: A lying tongue hates *those* afflicted by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Those who lie and flatter are full of evil and hatred. Have nothing to do with them.

Proverbs 27

1: Do not boast yourself of tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

We all live to a significant degree by “time and chance”—so we don’t know what will happen tomorrow. We should take the approach found James 4:13-15, that God’s *will* for us is key.

2: Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

Self-praise is worthless and makes one look petty. Do a good job—and let others point it out.

3: A stone *is* heavy, and sand *is* weighty; but a fool’s wrath *is* heavier than them both.

Fools who have no self-control are a dangerous in many ways.

4: Wrath *is* cruel and anger *is* overwhelming, but who *is* able to stand before jealousy?

Anger can be appeased, but jealousy has no limits for revenge.

5-6: Open rebuke *is* better than secret love. Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

If you love someone, be a faithful friend and don’t let grievous faults go uncontested.

7: The full soul loathes a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing *is* sweet.

Poverty teaches moderation, contentment, and appreciation.

8: As a bird that wanders from her nest, so *is* a man who wanders from his place.

Know your station in life. Don’t be a round peg trying to fit into a square hole.

9: Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart; so does the sweetness of one’s friend by advice from the heart.

Wise advice from a trusted friend is like the pleasure brought by fine ointment and perfume.

10: Your own friend, and your father’s friend, do not forsake them; nor go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity; better *is* a neighbor *that is* near than a brother far off.

Never abandon a friend—yours or a family friend. And remember that the ties of blood may be less reliable than those of genuine friendship.

11: My son, be wise and make my heart glad, so that I may answer him who reproaches me.

Make your parents happy—so they never have to explain your mistakes to others.

12: A prudent *man* foresees the evil *and* hides himself, *but* the simple pass on *and* are punished.

It is wise to be aware of dangerous circumstances and take evasive actions. This applies personally, locally, and even on a national level. Awareness and preparation are godly principles.

13: Take the garment of him who [foolishly] is surety *for* a stranger, and hold it in pledge *when* he is [foolishly] surety for a strange woman.

Getting involved in other people's misguided financial deals is not wise (Prov. 6:1-5; 11:15).

14: He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Use common sense and don't be *obnoxious* to your friends.

15-16: A never-ending dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whoever restrains her restrains the wind and can control oil in his right hand.

God has called us to peace. Nevertheless, some people are annoyingly contentious. Trying to reign them in is like trying to capture the wind.

17: As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Stimulating thought and discussion encourages stimulating thought and discussion.

18: Whoever tends the fig tree shall eat its fruit, and he who guards his master shall be honored.

Always earn your keep (II Thess. 3:10). Always do your very best (Eccl. 9:10).

19: As in water, the face reflects itself, so the heart of man reflects the man.

Your *heart* is revealed by your innermost thoughts, your attitude, your outlook.

20: The grave and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

A key human failing is the lust of the eyes—which never seem to get enough.

21: As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so *is* a man tested by the praise given to him.

How a man *handles praise* says a great deal about his character.

22: Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed wheat, *yet* his foolishness will not depart from him.

It is most difficult to remove foolishness from those bent on self-destruction.

23-24: Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, *and* give attention to your herds. For riches *are* not forever; nor does the crown *endure* to every generation.

In *every* area of life, diligence pays off. So be awake and on the ball!

Proverbs 28

1: The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Those who live apart from God are easily unnerved, but those who live God's way and trust in Him have a special kind of courage. They know and claim God's promises (see Deut. 31:6 and Psa. 31:24, for example).

2: Because of the transgression of a land [nation], many *are* its rulers, but with a man of understanding *and* knowledge the state shall be prolonged.

Nations riddled with corruption and evil are hampered by a too-frequent succession of leaders.

3: A poor man who oppresses the poor *is like* a sweeping rain which leaves no food.

Like a quick rain that fails to nourish the ground, harassing the poor is an exercise in futility.

4: Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law contend against them.

Always stand up for God's teachings and oppose those who would nullify them!

5: Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand all *things*.

Understanding comes only to those who keep God's laws and commandments.

6: Better *is* the poor who walks in his uprightness than he who *is* perverse *in his* ways, though he *is* rich.

At the end of the day, nothing—*nothing*—matters more than living uprightly.

7: Whoever keeps the law *is* a wise son, but a companion of riotous men shames his father.

A godly son will make his father proud—and our heavenly Father even prouder!

8: He who increases his wealth by interest and unjust gain, he shall gather it for him who will pity the poor.

When you die, your wealth will go to others—and sometimes to those with generous hearts.

9: He who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination.

If you don't want to hear what God says in His Word, don't waste your time praying.

10: Whoever causes the righteous man to go astray in an evil way, he himself shall fall into his own pit, but the upright shall inherit good.

Trying to lead good people astray is a grievous sin that will not go unpunished.

11: The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit, but the poor man who has understanding will find him out.

Godly understanding is priceless, and will always expose the vain ideas of materialism.

12: When the righteous triumph, *there is* great glory; but when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.

We see this being played out around the world today as evil leaders are increasingly successful in obtaining office.

13: He who covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* shall have mercy.

Honesty is the best policy—especially toward God, who is full of mercy.

14: Blessed *is* the man who fears always, but he who hardens his heart shall fall into mischief.

Hardening your heart against God or righteous correction will always cost you.

15: *Like* a roaring lion and a ranging bear, *so is* a wicked ruler over the helpless people.

Evil rulers don't care about their people—they only want power and wealth.

16: A ruler lacking understanding *is* also a great oppressor; he who hates covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

Bad leaders always end up as oppressors.

17: A man who is laden with human blood, let him be a fugitive until the grave; do not let anyone help him.

You reap what you sow; violence and hatred will lead to your ruin.

18: Whoever walks uprightly shall be saved, but he who is perverse *in his* ways shall fall at once.

God's way of life always works—and leads to eternal life!

19: He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who pursues fantasies [unrealistic dreams] shall have poverty enough.

Work hard and don't get involved in foolish ventures.

20: A faithful man shall overflow with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich shall not be unpunished.

Focusing on wealth will make for a miserable, unfulfilling life. Focus on faithfulness to God.

21: To have respect of persons *is* not good; yea, for a piece of bread a man will transgress.

Never show favoritism, but be impartial in all your dealings. Human nature is bent toward evil.

22: He who hastens to be rich *has* an evil eye and does not know that poverty will come upon him.

Having an “evil eye” means you are greedy and think only of yourself. Ultimately, you will fall into poverty—and spiritual ruin.

23: He who rebukes a man shall afterwards find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue.

Seems counterintuitive, but you will often win a friend by being up front with him and telling him he is wrong. But flattery—people can see right through that.

24: Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, “*It is no sin,*” he *shall be* a companion to a destroyer.

A child who steals from his mother and father is guilty of a capital crime before God.

25: He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, but he who puts his trust in the LORD shall be enriched.

Pride begets conflict. Instead, be peaceable and trust in God—and all will go well.

26: He who trusts in his own heart is a fool; but whoever walks wisely, he shall be delivered.

Don't trust in your *own* ideas and solutions; rather, follow God's way and inherit salvation.

27: He who gives to the poor shall not lack, but he who hides his eyes [from those in need] shall have many a curse.

The “evil eye” again. Better to graciously help others and be blessed—and sleep well at night.

28: When the wicked arise, a man hides himself; but when they perish, the righteous increase.

Bad leadership destroys a nation. But the righteous rejoice when good leaders arise.

Proverbs 29

1: A man who hardens *his* neck when reprov'd shall be suddenly broken—and that without remedy.

Being resistant to correction will hamper your relationship with any employer—not to mention your parents and God.

2: When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people mourn.

We see this cycle repeating itself around the world.

3: Whoever loves wisdom rejoices his father, but a companion of harlots wastes his wealth.

Make your parents happy by showing some good sense—and avoid wasteful vices.

4: The king establishes the land by justice, but he who takes bribes tears it down.

Justice and equity cannot exist when leaders are corrupt and greedy.

5: A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

Flattery is seldom innocuous; rather, an evil agenda is likely at play!

6: In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare, but the righteous sings and rejoices.

Sinners ultimately lay a snare for *themselves*.

7: The righteous considers the plea of the poor; the wicked cares not to know *it*.

Those who live God’s way of life are attuned to the needs of the poor. Psalm 41 says that those who consider the needs of the poor will be blessed and protected by God (verses 1-3).

8: Scornful men bring a city into a snare, but the wise turn away wrath.

Evil leaders will eventually bring a city to destruction.

9: *If* a wise man contends with a foolish man, whether he rages or laughs, *there is* no rest.

The point is, don't engage a fool!

10: The bloodthirsty hate the upright, but the just seeks his wellbeing.

The righteous man seeks the wellbeing and good fortune of *everyone*.

11: A fool utters all his mind, but a wise one keeps it in until afterwards.

Don't tell everybody everything you know—at least not immediately.

12: If a ruler hearkens to lies, all his servants *are* wicked.

If a ruler gives heed to liars, his subordinates will quickly become liars to gain his favor.

13: The poor and the deceitful man meet together; the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.

Likewise, it rains on the just and on the unjust. Why? Because God is merciful.

14: A king who faithfully judges the poor, his throne shall be established forever.

It's easy to do good to those who are wealthy or influential; but to equally honor a poor man is the mark of righteous leadership.

15: The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Children subconsciously *want* to be corrected; boundaries give them security, direction.

16: When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases; but the righteous shall see their fall.

Righteousness will ultimately prevail. All evildoers will in time perish.

17: Correct your son, and he shall give you rest; yea, he shall give delight to your soul.

Again, children want and need direction; they find comfort in limits, boundaries, guidelines.

18: Where *there is* no vision, the people perish; but happy is he who keeps the law.

With no thought for the future, no plan or purpose, people end up in ruin.

19: A servant will not be corrected by words; for though he understands, he will not answer.

Some people are of such a stubborn nature that it takes more than words to get their attention.

20: Do you see a man hasty in his words? *There is* more hope for a fool than for him.

Measure your words carefully; talk less, say more.

21: He who pampers his servant from childhood shall have him become *his* son in the end.

Properly treated, a servant can become like a member of the family.

22: An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.

People who do not have control of their emotions get into all kinds of trouble.

23: A man's pride shall bring him low, but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Pride is probably our greatest enemy. But God looks to those with a "poor and contrite" spirit who take His Word seriously (Isa. 66:2).

24: He who is partner with a thief hates his own soul; he hears the curse but does not reveal anything.

Practicing theft is like hating yourself, for you will surely come to ruin!

25: The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever puts his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Don't worry about what people think; just trust and obey God and He will take care of you.

26: Many seek the ruler's favor, but each man's judgment *comes* from the LORD.

Seeking the favor of others is fine, but ultimately God is our judge. So seek His favor!

27: An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just, and *he who is* upright in the way *is* an abomination to the wicked.

Just men hate wickedness. But wicked men also hate those who are upright.

Proverbs 30

1-3: The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy [oracle]: The man spoke to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal, saying, "Surely I *am* more like an animal than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor the knowledge of the holy."

Chapters 30 and 31 are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs—but they are no doubt inspired, as chapter 30 is specifically an "oracle" from God. Both chapters were likely added by the "men of Hezekiah" (Prov. 25:1). Agur is apparently a teacher of sorts, Ithiel and Ucal his pupils. As such, Agur approaches his task with a certain respectable humility (verses 2-4).

4: Who has gone up to heaven and has come down? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in His garments? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son's name, if you know?

Agur's questions are rhetorical, for only God has accomplished such feats. His motive is to exalt God and confirm man's subordinate position.

5-6: Every word of God *is* pure; He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He correct you and you be found a liar.

Through the Scriptures, God has said what *needs* to be said—what He wants mankind to know. Adding to His words will only bring you trouble (see Deut. 4:2 and Rev. 22:18-19).

7-9: I have asked two things from You; do not deny them before I die: Remove far from me vanity and a lying word; give me neither poverty or riches; feed me my portion of bread, lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who *is* the LORD?" Or lest I be poor, and steal, and violate the name of my God.

A humble request for God to provide only what one really needs—no poverty, yet no wealth. It is wise to recognize that *either one* can lead to sin.

10: Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.

A man will defend and protect his property, including his servants. So mind your own business.

11-14: *There is* a generation that curses their father and does not bless their mother. *There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their own filthiness. *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. *There is* a generation whose teeth *are like* swords, and their jaw teeth like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth and the needy from among men.

The writer decries what is likely an *upcoming generation* that has no fear of God: They dishonor their parents; they are haughty in their sins; they are proud and vain; and they don't care if their lifestyles hurt others. This is what happens when nations drift from God.

15-16: The leech has two daughters, *crying*, "Give, give!" Three things are never satisfied, yea, four things never say, "Enough!" The grave, the barren womb, the earth not filled with water, and the fire have never said, "Enough."

Wise observations on the more tragic side of life.

17: The eye *that* mocks at *his* father and despises to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

The point is that anyone who dishonors his or her parents will face severe consequences.

18-19: Three things *which* are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a snake on a rock; the way of a ship in the middle of the sea; and the way of a man with a maiden.

Here the author is marveling at the creative wisdom of God.

20: Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman: she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, “I have done no wickedness.”

Sexual sins in particular sear the conscience—so that one cannot even see the evil!

21-23: For three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four it is not able to bear up: For a slave when he reigns; and a fool when he is filled with food; for a hateful *woman* when she is married; and a servant girl that is heir to her mistress.

Some unfortunate situations are absolutely incongruous—and they bring nothing but trouble!

24-28: Four *things are* little on the earth, but they *are* exceedingly wise: The ants *are* a creature not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer; the rock badgers *are* not mighty creatures, yet they make their houses in the rock; the locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands; you can catch a lizard with your hands, yet it *is* in king’s palaces.

God’s marvelous creative wisdom is showcased in even the smallest of creatures!

29-31: There are three *things* which go well, yea, four that go stately in walking: A lion *is* mighty among beasts and does not turn away for any; a greyhound, a male goat also, and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.

The emphasis here is on the *majestic nature* of a powerful and righteous king.

32-33: If you have done foolishly in exalting yourself, or if you have thought evil, *lay* your hand on your mouth. Surely as the churning of milk brings forth butter, and the wringing of the nose brings forth blood, so the forcing of wrath brings forth strife.

Everything is cause and effect (Gal. 6:7). We all err; so follow Jesus’ admonition: “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Proverbs 31

1: The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:

Scholars debate on the identity of Lemuel: possibly Solomon, or another righteous king. The teachings are not his, but were taught to him by his wise mother.

2: “What, my son? And what, O son of my womb? And what, O son of my vows?”

Meaning: “What am I to say to you my son—son of my womb, son of my vows?”

3: Do not give your strength unto women, nor your ways unto that which destroys kings.

There are many vices that destroy people; sexual immorality tops the list.

4-5: *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink—lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the rights of all of the afflicted.

Drunkenness is not befitting a leader—for it prevents one from teaching the people, ruling fairly, or making godly judgments. See Isaiah 28:7.

6-7: Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Alcohol can help “ease the pain” under some circumstances. But remember, the problem will still be there tomorrow!

8-9: Open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of all who are appointed to destruction. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

It is always right to *defend* those who need help—who often cannot help themselves.

10: Who can find a virtuous woman? For her value *is* far above rubies.

The next few verses describe a woman of virtue—the kind of wife every man desires.

11-12: The heart of her husband trusts safely in her, so that he shall have no lack of gain. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Her husband trusts her completely and has absolute confidence in her efforts.

13-14: She seeks wool and flax, and works willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she brings her food from afar.

She develops skills of her own to add to the quality of her home—always looking for new ways to bless her family.

15: She also rises while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and a portion to her young maidens.

Being an “early riser” is an important key to her success.

16: She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

She is able to plan and run a small vineyard to add to the family’s prosperity.

17: She binds her loins with strength and makes her arms strong.

Zealous to be productive, she puts her all into caring for her family and community.

18: She sees that her merchandise *is* good; her lamp does not go out by night.

She makes quality items to sell, often working late into the night.

19-20: She lays her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy.

She makes extra clothing for the poor—and is always ready to help those in need.

21: She is not afraid of the snow for her household—for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet [Hebrew, *doubled garments*].

She dutifully makes heavy clothing for her family that is suitable for even the coldest weather.

22: She makes herself coverings; her clothing *is* silk and purple.

She makes her own clothing—is well adorned, but not extravagantly.

23: Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

Her husband is also a man of integrity and honor—and has a fitting place among the leaders.

24: She makes fine linen and sells *it*, and delivers girdles to the merchants.

She uses her many skills to add to the family income. No laziness here.

25: Strength and dignity *are* her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She lives her life in such a way that assures her of a long and happy life—and eternity.

26: She opens her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

Her relationship with God produces a spirit of wisdom—and she teaches kindness by example.

27: She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

She is always productive and busy in her care for her family—yet that does not mean she cannot enjoy time with friends or engaging in hobbies.

28-29: Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband *also*, and he praises her: “Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.”

It is obvious to everyone that she is richly blessed by God for her diligence and goodness.

30: Favor *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain; *but* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

Beauty and modesty need to be coupled with the fear of God—that is success.

31: Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Such a woman will reap the fruit of her good works and enjoy the appropriate honor.

—edited by Philip Neal, 2021-22