

# Proverbs

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*Seeing the End from the Beginning*

1

## Outline

- I. Choose Wisdom; Avoid Folly (1:1 – 9:18)
- II. Collection of Solomon’s Proverbs (10:1 – 24:34)
- III. Collection of Solomon’s Proverbs, Assembled by Hezekiah’s men (25:1 – 29:27)
- IV. Words of Agur (30:1-33).
- V. Words of King Lemuel’s Mother (31:1-31)

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## Purpose & Audience

1. In your own words, what is the purpose of Proverbs? To whom is it specifically directed? Why would they especially need it?

*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, Justice, judgment, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion – A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, To understand a proverb and an enigma, The words of the wise and their riddles. (1:2-6)*

- Briefly, to provide full, essential, true wisdom.

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## TEXT & CLASS INTRODUCTION

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2

## Plan of Study

- First – Chapters 1-9: Textual, sequential, emphasizing main points
- Second – Chapters 10-31:
  - Topical – grouped (not perfectly) according to primary point
  - No duplicated passages among groups.
  - Other categorizations may be equally valid or even better.
  - Best study would likely be sequential, read in natural order.
- Questions (10-15 per class):
  - Challenging thought questions.
  - Emphasis on effort and thought – not correctness.
  - Talk to parents, but email me or text me if you get stuck.

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## Purpose & Audience

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- Young, naïve desperately need wisdom – imminent “big” decisions.
- But, even the mature, the wise still need to grow as does life’s challenges.

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## Textual Introduction

- **Author** – Solomon with some arrangement by Hezekiah’s men
- **Goal** – *Wisdom*, to see the end from the beginning, make best decisions
- **Writing Style:**
  - **Proverb** – “a short, well-known pithy saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice” (Oxford Dictionaries)
  - **Hebrew Poetry** – Preference to rhyming thoughts over sounds
  - **Synonymous** – “The repetition of the same thought in two different phrases using two different, yet closely related, sets of words” (Longman, 99).
  - **Antithetic** – “The same thought is expressed, but expressed from two different and often opposite perspectives” (Longman, 99).
  - **Synthetic** – Following lines add to the first, supplementing or expanding its meaning.

3

## PROVERBS 1:1-9

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*Goal of Studying Proverbs*

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## Foundation of Real Knowledge

2. What is the “beginning of knowledge”? Why does real knowledge begin there?

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)*

*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. (Psalm 14:1; 53:1)*

- Fundamental truth from which all knowledge is derived, guided.
- Limitations in our knowledge require faith to accept truth (Hebrews 11:1, 6).
- Wisdom is seeing the end from the beginning. Who has seen the end of all things and can tell us about it (30:2-6)?

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***"He who has an ear to hear ..."***

3. What kind of people listens and gains knowledge? How are people described who refuse to listen? What is the motivation of each?

*A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. ... But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (1:5-7)*

- Wise see value in wisdom and seek to gain it, ever "increasing".
- "Fools despise" – despise, hold in contempt or as insignificant (BDB)

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**Unwitting Suicide**

5. Do the robbers and murders know they "lie in wait for their own blood" and "lurk secretly for their own lives"? If they intended something else, then how do they forfeit their own lives?

*My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit; We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil; Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse" – My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; For their feet run to evil, And they 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 lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners. (1:10-19)*

13

**Robbers, Murderers Among Us?**

*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ... Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19)*

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**Graceful Ornaments**

*My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck (1:8-9)*

4. How does the "instruction of your father" and the "law of your mother" become a "graceful ornament on your head and chains about your neck"?

- Correctness, value of parental instruction may not be obvious immediately.
- Must trust the inspired author ("faith"). When it occurs, you will know he was right.
- Obedience to godly instruction produces obvious, evident behavior that all can see and recognize as easily as beautiful, costly jewelry & crowns.

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**Unwitting Suicide**

5. Do the robbers and murders know they "lie in wait for their own blood" and "lurk secretly for their own lives"? If they intended something else, then how do they forfeit their own lives?

- Consequences of crime generally destroy criminals (e.g., destructive habits, prison, death.)
- However, criminals do not foresee it, or foolishly do not care, until it is too late.
- Birds are too smart to step into a trap they see laid before them.
- But, unlike birds, criminals see the trap laid in front of them – for them – and they walk into it anyway.

14

**PROVERBS 1:20-33**

*The Ends of Foolishness and Wisdom*

17

**PROVERBS 1:10-19**

*The End of Greed*

12

**Robbers, Murderers Among Us?**

6. Robbery and murder tempts few among the Lord's church. How can we apply this to us?

*Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird; But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners. (1:17-19)*

- Anyone who is "greedy for gain" falls into this trap.
- The trap may look different, but the consequences are the same – ruin.

15

**Wisdom, Pleading & Accessible**

*Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses, At the openings of the gates in the city. She speaks her words: "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you." (1:20-23)*

7. If wisdom is personified as a woman, why is it significant that she "raises her voice in the open squares", that she "cries out in the chief concourses"?

- With loud, unignorable volume she "calls aloud" in the central, most heavily traveled parts of the city.
- Wisdom has made herself as accessible as possible.

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**Wisdom Rejected**

8. If she, her rebuke, and her words are accessible, why does not everyone accept her wisdom?

19

**Wisdom's Rejection**

*How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. (Proverbs 1:22-30; see also, Deuteronomy 1:41-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)*

22

**Considering Both Ends**

10. In contrast, what can those expect, who listen to wisdom?  
*"Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil." (1:31-33)*

- Wisdom leads to the best *physical* life, but *ultimately*, it leads to the best *spiritual* life, one lived with hope, confidence, peace, and joy without fear of ultimate destruction.
- You must be willing to listen with faith, look down the road, and make the hard-choices, sacrificing short-term pleasure for long-term reward.

25

**Wisdom Rejected**

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20

**Wisdom Rejection**

- Wisdom is rejected, because:
  - The listeners *neither like* nor *value* her correction.
  - The listeners *enjoy* and *delight* in their own path & its immediate fruit.

*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26)*

- Sin is generally, indeed pleasurable *for the moment*, but it destroys in the end. Are you willing to take the long-view, see the end from the beginning?
- Scarily, wisdom turns its back on those who call for help in the end!

23

**PROVERBS 2:1-9**

*The Path to Wisdom*

26

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21

**A Loving, Merciful God?**

9. Does God want everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9)? Is He willing to forgive the most wicked of sinners (2 Chronicles 33:9-13; 1 Timothy 1:12-16)? Then, how do you harmonize wisdom's refusal to help in Proverbs 1:23-31 with God's love and mercy?

- Does God want everyone to be saved? Absolutely (2 Peter 3:9)!
- Is He willing to forgive the most wicked? For sure (2 Chronicles 33:9-13; 1 Timothy 1:12-16)!
- However, no one can out-smart God or "game" Him (Galatians 6:7-8).
- Eventually, even God's patience runs out (Numbers 14:22-24; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Matthew 24:45-25:13; 2 Peter 3:1-11).
- Plus, physical consequences may follow all our lives (2 Samuel 12:7-19).

24

**Finding Wisdom**

1. Summarize what is required to find wisdom? Why would this be expanded to fill 9 verses?  
*My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; (2:1-4)*

- Must *diligently* seek for wisdom, more than earth's greatest treasures!
- Expanded for *emphasis* – it is *very, very, very* important to seek for it *very, very, very diligently!* ☺ ... Maybe easily forgotten, distracted, or lost?
- How does one "cry out for discernment" and "lift up your voice for understanding"? ... More on this next question ...

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**Wisdom's Giver**

2. Who is the One who provides wisdom? To whom does He give it?  
*Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. (2:5-8)*

- The Lord gives wisdom to those who “cry out for discernment” and “lift up your voice for understanding”. But, **how?**
- Books like Proverbs provide wisdom, understanding, and “good doctrine” (4:1-2; 23:23-26).
- Parental discipline and many teachers also “give wisdom” (24:29-15, 5-6).
- Anything else?

28

**PROVERBS 2:10-22**

*The Preservation of Wisdom*

31

**... From Immoral Woman**

6. Who does the immoral woman abandon? How is she forgetting and forsaking them?  
*To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words, Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God, (2:16-17)*

- Through sexual immorality, she turns her back on her husband and God.
- She sins against God’s law and therefore God (Exo. 20:14; Col. 3:1-6).
- Joseph recognized adultery was against both Potiphar and God (Gen.39:7-9).
- Reference to “companion of her youth” conjures images of long-standing commitments, trusts, and bonds, emphasizing despicableness (Mal. 2:13-16).

34

**Praying for Wisdom**

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (James 1:5-7)*

- God gives wisdom to “any” and “all” who ask – prayer (Matthew 7:7-11)!
- But, must ask “in faith, with no doubting”?
- To those, He gives “liberally” and “without reproach” (i.e., gladly).
- May be provided through trials, which require faith to overcome, Jms. 1:2-4.
- Certainly, God provides wisdom through the Bible (Ephesians 3:3-5, 10; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:7-13).

29

**The Path of Preservation**

*When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, (2:10-11)*

4. How does wisdom generally preserve us?

- Emphasizes sincere desire (“is pleasant to your soul”) and full acceptance (“enters your heart”). No value in speed-reading or class attendance.
- Wisdom and knowledge will teach you the path to choose that leads to preservation and protection.
- The remainder of this section introduces characters and dangers that will try to knock us off the good path of wisdom and preservation.

32

**Danger of Immoral Woman**

7. Why is the immoral woman so dangerous to a wise father’s sons?  
*For her house leads down to death, And her paths to the dead; None who go to her return, Nor do they regain the paths of life – So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness. (2:18-20)*

- Unlike the path of wisdom – her path leads to death and destruction.
- There is zero hope, no chance of walking down her path and that of wisdom.
- Her path always leads to death.
- The only hope is to stay off – get off – her path.
- She will lure you off the “way of goodness” and the path of wisdom if at all possible!
- The danger of this woman and her seductive allurements cannot be overemphasized.

35

**The Key of Wisdom**

3. What other ideals or principles does wisdom help us to understand?  
*Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. ... Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path. (2:5, 9)*

- Wisdom helps us to “understand” a proper fear, knowledge of God – understanding His character and ways.
- Wisdom also helps us to understand the general virtues of righteousness, justice, fairness, and the path to every other good virtue (i.e., love, mercy, etc.).
- Wisdom is a key that unlocks understanding of all other good things and growth in them, which makes it extremely valuable to those who love good.

30

**... From Evil & Perversity**

5. How does wisdom specifically preserve us from the “way of evil” and the “man who speaks perverse things”?  
*To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice in doing evil, And delight in the perversity of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, And who are devious in their paths; (2:12-15)*

- Identifies the motivation and behavior of these dangerous people: twist (i.e., pervert) truth and wisdom, depart from well-established & well-known paths of righteousness, choose to hide their ways, love to do evil, love for others to twist righteousness into wickedness, are not straightforward, and are crafty.

33

**Staying in the Path of Wisdom**

8. Why is it important to “walk in the way of goodness and to keep the paths of righteousness”? Does this always happen? How does it ever happen?  
*So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, And the blameless will remain in it; But the wicked will be cut off from the earth, And the unfaithful will be uprooted from it. (2:20-22)*

- Earthly preservation depends on staying in the path.
- Earthly consequences of sin generally follow.
- Exceptions are few, and it is folly to hope for them.
- Furthermore, the actions – “cut off” and “uprooted” – indicate deliberate action and therefore judgment, disapproval from God, which therefore implies spiritual condemnation as well.

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## PROVERBS 3:1-8

*Forgotten Wisdom*

37

## PROVERBS 3:9-26

*Wisdom's Generosity toward the Lord*

40

## Health & Wealth Gospel?

*So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. (3:10)*

4. Is this promising that if we give to God first, He will make us rich?  
Explain.

- God has promised to care of the generous, providing what they need to give.
- Generally, wisdom & generosity indeed produces more wealth than foolishness & stinginess.
- Providence favors the generous (**Ecclesiastes 11:1-6!**)
- However, exceptions occur. Only absolute certainty is spiritual reward for generosity (**Matthew 25:31-46**).
- Are you measuring physical wealth against what you need – or against what you want and what others have?

43

## Finding Favor with God and Man

1. How does one “find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man”?  
*My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you: Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man. (3:1-4)*

- Can be easy to forget and forsake God’s law and commands.
- If we forsake “mercy and truth”, they will forsake us (see **Pro. 1:23-33**).
- Must diligently keep them in the forefront of our mind (**Deu. 6:1-9**).

*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)*

38

## Honor God with Possessions?

*Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; (3:9)*

3. How would you “honor the Lord with your possessions”?

- Give directly to God first – significance of “firstfruits” – not afterthought.
- ... Cheerfully, liberally (**2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2**).
- Beyond church, giving to the poor as giving to God (**Proverbs 19:17**).
- Also include supporting evangelists (**Galatians 6:6; 3 John 5-8**).
- Must learn to **balance**, using good judgment & discretion:
  - We are His creation and servants. All we have belongs to Him (**1 Cor. 6:19-20!**)
  - However, we are permitted use for enjoyment (**Acts 5:4; Ecc. 2:24-26; 5:18-19**).
- Can be helpful to take vacations & enjoy God’s blessings – to avoid burnout.
- Are we enjoying in abundance, gorging ourselves beyond benefit to His work?

41

## Happy in Correction?

*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights. Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; (3:11-13)*

5. How does the Lord chasten us? How could we “despise” or “detest” it?  
How can we be “happy” in it?

44

## Challenges to Faith & Humility

2. What obstacles are stated are implied, which might hamper our obtaining wisdom?

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on 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. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. (3:5-8)*

- “Evil” and the path of foolishness may appear appealing & “not so bad”.
- Trusting God through faith and humbly listening to Him is the only way to overcome.
- Do not second guess His commands and wisdom, preferring your own.

39

## Health & Wealth Gospel?

*So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. (3:10)*

4. Is this promising that if we give to God first, He will make us rich?  
Explain.

- God has promised to care of the generous, providing what they need to give: *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.* As it is written: “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. (**2 Cor. 9:8-11**)

42

## Happy in Correction

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5. How does the Lord chasten us? How could we “despise” or “detest” it?  
How can we be “happy” in it?

- God can both **providentially** chasten through difficulties & trials in life – and through His Word, but even providential chastening drives us to His Word (**Psa. 119:67, 71, 50**).
- Difficulties do not always imply correction, but the wise always consider and examine themselves (**Ecclesiastes 8:16-9:2; 7:13-14**).
- Can rejoice in trials because implies worthiness and brings true growth.

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**Happy in Correction!**

*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**" (Matthew 5:11-12)*

*So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.** (Acts 5:41)*

*My brethren, **count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.** (James 1:2-4)*

46

**The Fruits & Value of Wisdom**

7. Summarize the benefits of obtaining and following wisdom that are elaborated here.

49

**PROVERBS 3:27-35**

*Wisdom's Generosity toward Our Neighbor*

52

**Happy in Correction!**

*For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you **as to sons:** "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you **as with sons;** for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and **not sons.** Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He **for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.** Now no chastening seems to be joyful **for the present, but painful;** nevertheless, **afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.** (Hebrews 12:3-13)*

47

**The Fruits & Value of Wisdom**

*For her proceeds are **better than the profits of silver,** And her gain **than fine gold.** She is **more precious than rubies,** And **all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.** Length of days is in her right hand, 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 take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her. ... My son, let them **not depart from your eyes – Keep sound wisdom and discretion;** So they will be **life to your soul** And **grace to your neck.** Then you will **walk safely in your way,** And your foot will **not stumble.** When you lie down, you will **not be afraid;** Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be **sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror,** Nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; For **the LORD will be your confidence,** And will **keep your foot from being caught.** (Proverbs 3:14-26)*

50

**"Go, Be Warmed, & Filled"**

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you. (3:27-28)*

8. In this context, in what ways might a person be tempted to "oppress" his neighbor?

- One possible way of not "honoring the Lord with your possessions" – represents one form of stinginess & greed – not generosity.
- A promise for tomorrow has no value to anyone whose need is for today (James 2:14-17).

53

**Creation through Wisdom**

*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens; By His knowledge the depths were broken up, And clouds drop down the dew. (3:19-20)*

6. Why would Solomon note here that God used wisdom to create the world and sustain it?

- Emphasizes the great **power & value** of wisdom, because the greatest work ever was accomplished and continues to be accomplished through wisdom.

48

**The Fruits & Value of Wisdom**

7. Summarize the benefits of obtaining and following wisdom that are elaborated here.

- Better than all wealth & desirable things – nothing else compares.
- Offers longer life, riches, and honor.
- Offers pleasantness, peace, happiness.
- Provides confidence in the Lord and salvation.
- Bible begins with the "tree of life" being lost (Gen. 3:24), and it ends with it being restored (Rev. 22:1-5). But, access to it is offered here in the middle.

51

**Robbing Your Insurance**

9. Why is such oppression ill advised?

*Do not devise evil against your neighbor, For he dwells by you for safety's sake. 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; (3:29-31)*

- First, neighbors are given by God as insurance – "for safety's sake" – they can help in time of need.
- Like an oppressor, we may become jealous of our neighbor and not only fail to help him, we may actively oppress him for spite or for claiming his stuff.
- Second ...

54

**The Lord's Choice & Favor**

10. What blessings does the Lord offer to what kind of people?  
*For the perverse person is an abomination to the LORD. But His secret counsel is with the upright. The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked. But He blesses the home of the just. Surely He scorns the scornful. But gives grace to the humble. The wise shall inherit glory. But shame shall be the legacy of fools. (3:32-35)*

- Blesses the upright, just, **humble**, and wise.
- Working definition (primary application) for "humility" → **teachable**.
- Not "learnable", teachable. Arrogant people can learn, but they cannot learn **from others** – cannot be **taught** – by God or anyone else.

55

**The Critical Need for Wisdom**

2. Why is it so critical and essential to gain wisdom? What blessings does wisdom bestow?

58

**PROVERBS 4:14-27**

*The Path of Wisdom versus Evil*

61

**PROVERBS 4:1-13**

*The Criticality of Wisdom*

56

**The Critical Need for Wisdom**

*"Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor; when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you." Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life. (4:10-13)*

- Wisdom's benefits make it more valuable than anything else or any cost.

59

**The Deep Hunger of the Wicked**

4. How severe or strong is people's desire for evil who walk in that path? How does this help us to avoid that path?  
<sup>1</sup>*Do not enter the path of the wicked, And <sup>2</sup>do not walk in the way of evil. <sup>3</sup>Avoid it, <sup>4</sup>do not travel on it; <sup>5</sup>Turn away from it and <sup>6</sup>pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence. (4:14-17)*

- Represent people who cannot be satisfied without doing evil and destroying other people. It is their constant, daily life (1 Peter 5:8).
- Indicates **our final state**, if we start down that path – motivation to never start down that terrible path.
- **Contrast:** Are we similarly "**hungering for righteousness**" (Matt. 5:6)?

62

**Appreciating Wisdom in Youth**

1. How is it helpful to learn that Solomon's father, David, instructed his son about the importance of wisdom?  
*Hear, my children, the instruction of a father. And give attention to know understanding; For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law. When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, He also taught me, and said to me ... (4:1-4)*

- Enhances appreciation of wisdom's value by knowing that it was something that produced not only Solomon's success, but also David's (1 Sam. 13:14).
- Further enhances the value of appreciating wisdom **early** – in your **youth** – because that contributed to Solomon's success (1 Kings 3:3-15; Ecc. 12:1).
- ... which helps us to "**hear ... give attention ... not forsake**".

57

**Keeping & Exalting Wisdom**

*Get wisdom! Get understanding! ... Do not forsake her ... Love her ... Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her ...embrace her. ... take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her ... (4:10-13)*

3. If wisdom is again personified as a woman, beyond just "getting" wisdom, how does one "keep" her, "exalt" her, and "not forsake" her?

- Must make wisdom the **highest priority** – sacrifice whatever would compromise, devalue, or risk it.
- Act in wisdom! Make the choices that wisdom advises.
- Wisdom must be at the forefront of our mind – as much as possible, so you can understand it and use it (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).
- Are other things taking **higher** priority than Bible study – your Bible lesson?

60

**"Walking in the Light"**

5. In what two ways is the "path of the just" different from the "way of the wicked"?

*But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble. (4:18-19)*

- The "path of the just" is as clear, visible & discernible as the "**shining sun**".
- **Contrast:** The wicked cannot see their path or its obstacles, and so stumble – not even knowing or understanding what happened.
- The "path of the just" becomes increasingly clear, "**ever brighter**". This becomes more obvious to them, but it may be more obvious to others observing in the end.

*Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)*

63

***“In the Midst of Your Heart”***

6. How would one keep David’s and Solomon’s “words” and “sayings” in the “midst” of one’s “heart”?

*My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them 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. (4:20-22)*

- Represents **priority** – but especially, **consistency & frequency**.
- Emphasizes & repeats critical point:
  - Pursuit & use of wisdom must **not** be an **occasional, fleeting** thought.
  - Wisdom must be a **constant** – at the **center** of who we are until wisdom **defines** us – it is **entirely** who we are.
- Lame, sickly, little sheep may be part of the flock today, but what will they do when the wolves come? What will their end be then?

64

**PROVERBS 5:1-23**

*The Danger of the Immoral Woman*

67

**How the Serpent Turns**

*Therefore **hear me now**, my children, And do **not depart** from the words of my mouth. **Remove your way far from her**, And do not go **near the door of her house**. **Lest you give your honor to others**. And your years to **the cruel one**; **Lest aliens be filled with your wealth**. And your labors go to the house of a **foreigner**; (5:7-10)*

3. How would getting too close to an “immoral woman” rob you as described in verses 8-10?

- The immoral woman is **only** interested in the **things** you provide (food, clothes, house, money, etc.). ... You are a **means** to an **end**!
- She has no interest in you, and once she has you **emotionally hooked**, she will turn on you and oppress you for all your worth.
- She may even marry you, but she is only interested in building up her own “house” in the long-term, even if she shares a dwelling with you short-term.

70

**Self-Examination**

7. How would you “keep your heart with all diligence”, “ponder the path of your feet”, and “let all your ways be established”? What does this mean?

***Keep your heart with all diligence**, For out of it **spring the issues of life**. Put away from you a **deceitful mouth**, And put **perverse lips far from you**. Let your eyes look **straight ahead**, And your eyelids look **right before you**. **Ponder the path of your feet**, And let all your ways **be established**. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil. (4:23-27)*

- Speaks to importance of **self-examination**, honestly examining our actions as if examined by someone else – **unbiased, honest**, with **integrity**.
- Justify everything you do, so you can do it **integrity** – or **change**! Don’t do anything without **thinking, examining, criticizing, testing** it.

65

**Contentment Applied**

1. How does the specific advice of **Proverbs 5** to avoid the immoral woman relate to the general advice closing **Proverbs 4**? Especially compare **4:26** to **5:5-6** and **5:21**.

*Let your eyes **look straight ahead**, And your eyelids **look right before you**. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. **Do not turn to the right or the left**; **Remove your foot from evil**. (4:23-27)*

- Self-examination, focus, and contentment were the general lessons learned previously.
- The immoral woman’s **deceitful** and **alluring** nature will require application of these lessons – maintaining honesty, not being drawn off the path by curiosity, dissatisfaction, jealousy, etc.
- We better ponder our path, because God is pondering and will judge.

68

**The Hope of the Prodigal Son**

*And you **mourn at last**, When your flesh and your body are **consumed**. And say: “How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the **verge of total ruin**. In the midst of the assembly and congregation.” (5:11-14)*

4. What New Testament character “came to himself” or “came to his senses” as is similarly described in verses 11-14? How much hope is extended to such a person here?

- The prodigal son realized his foolishness only in the pig pen (**Lk. 15:10-32**).
- Like Samson, here this person’s body and life is ruined (**Judges 16**).
- Repentance, spiritual salvation remains to prevent “total ruin” (**Heb. 11:32**).

71

**Contentment Generalized**

8. How is that helped by the advice to “let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you” and to “not turn to the right or the left”?

*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it **spring the issues of life**. Put away from you a **deceitful mouth**, And put **perverse lips far from you**. Let your eyes look **straight ahead**, And your eyelids look **right before you**. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. **Do not turn to the right or the left**; Remove your foot from evil. (4:23-27)*

- Frequent temptation to be jealous of ease, pleasure of wicked.
- Be content with the fruit of the path of wisdom, justice, and righteousness.
- Looking too long solidifies desire, desire produces sin, and sin death (**James 1:13-15**).

66

**Deceiving Appearances**

2. Contrast the first appearance of the “immoral woman” versus her latter end? What does this tell you about her character and her real agenda? Would she ever really love you?

*My son, **pay attention** to my wisdom; **Lend your ear** to my understanding, That you may preserve discretion. And your lips may keep knowledge. **For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey**. And her mouth is smoother than oil; **But in the end** she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. **Lest you ponder her path of life** – Her ways are **unstable**; You **do not know them**. (5:1-6)*

- She has a deceiving “wisdom”, impure, sensual, and opposite to “wisdom from above” (**James 3:5-15**).
- Despite her words, she will **hate** you, **hurt** you, and ultimately **kill** you **spiritually** (**John 8:44**; **Genesis 3**).
- Curiosity and arrogance (i.e., believing you understand her) will destroy you here.
- Represents a **general** problem with people alluring, calling us off the path of wisdom.

69

**“Marriage is Honorable”**

5. What alternative is provided man, so he is not so easily seduced by the immoral woman?

*Drink water from your **own cistern**, And running water from your **own well**. Should your fountains be **dispersed abroad**, Streams of water **in the streets**? Let them be **only your own**, And **not for strangers** with you. Let your fountain be **blessed**. And **rejoice with the wife of your youth**. ... And **always be enraptured with her love**. For **why should you**, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a **seductress**? (5:15-20)*

- God provides marriage as an equally “enrapturing” and **refreshing** pleasure.
- Turning to forbidden pleasures will prevent God from blessing you.

*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers **God will judge**. Let your conduct be **without covetousness**; be **content** with such things as you have. ... (Hebrews 13:4-5)*

72



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- God provides marriage as an equally “intoxicating” and refreshing pleasure.
- Turning to forbidden pleasures will prevent God from blessing you.
- Who wants to drink dirty water, running through all of the streets – common, filthy?
- God intended this to satisfy us even into maturity and old age, not just “youth”.
- As Solomon asks, “why” would you do this? There is no reason to destroy yourself.

73

**Gaming God?**

6. Can a person ever hope to out-smart God and avoid the consequences of his sin with an immoral woman? Why not?

*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray. (5:21-23)*

- Nothing is hidden from God (Hebrews 4:12-13)! Contrast with Pr. 4:23-27.
- Cannot possibly hope to game, outsmart, “mock” God (Galatians 6:7).
- He is active and designed the world to expose our hidden sins.
- ... take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out. (Numbers 32:23)

76

**Danger of Pledging Support**

*My son, if you become surety for your friend, If you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, You are snared by the words of your mouth; You are taken by the words of your mouth. So do this, my son, and deliver yourself; For you have come into the hand of your friend: Go and humble yourself; Plead with your friend. Give no sleep to your eyes, Nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, And like a bird from the hand of the fowler. (6:1-5)*

- 1. What does it mean to become “surety for your friend”? Why is this dangerous?
- Like cosigning a loan, this obligates one to pay in full if the other defaults.
- Pride & satisfaction comes from helping another – not turning someone down, but better to humble yourself and back out, get other person to repay, or assume it all.
- Obligating yourself to pay for someone else’s loans can be a severe source of oppressive discouragement – paying for what someone else cannot afford but yet enjoys – which can drive you off the path of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 7:7).

79

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- Nothing is hidden from God! ... Contrast with Proverbs 4:23-27.

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13)*

74

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- Nothing is hidden from God (Hebrews 4:12-13)! Contrast with Pr. 4:23-27.
- Cannot possibly hope to game, outsmart God, so we can “mock” (Gal. 6:7).
- He is active and designed the world to expose our hidden sins (Num. 32:23).
- God made a point to reveal David’s private sin publicly (2 Sam. 12:7-12)!
- ... not to mention we will stand before Him on Judgment Day (Rev. 21:8).

77

**The Ant’s Work Ethic**

2. Name at least two ways the ant can be a role model for industriousness?

*Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest. (6:6-8)*

- **Initiative** – First, the ant is self-motivated, needing no one to tell it or drive it to work. Do you need someone to tell you to get to work?
- **Proactive** – Second, the ant wisely stores food – in the midst of abundance (“summer ... harvest”), when she does not immediately need it – so, she will have food in the future when winter comes and food is scarce.
- Is an ant smarter than you? What abundance and luxuries do you enjoy now that you can use to provide for the future when resources are scarce?

80

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- Nothing is hidden from God (Hebrews 4:12-13)! Contrast with Pr. 4:23-27.
- Cannot possibly hope to game, outsmart, “mock” God.

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (Galatians 6:7)*

75

**PROVERBS 6:1-11**

*Financial Dangers*

78

**Danger of Procrastination**

3. What is a “sluggard”? How does one become a “sluggard”? Why is this dangerous?

*How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep – So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man. (6:9-11)*

- A sluggard is a lazy, slothful person – who will not work as needed.
- **Unintended Destruction** – Only wanted a “little sleep”, but a “little” accumulates and generally turns into a “lot”.
- Creates unnecessary emergencies, which turn into “poverty” and “need”.
- Laziness paves the way for unnecessary temptation & eliminates generosity (“money is a defense”, Ecc. 7:12: “working...that he may give”, Eph. 4:28).

81

## PROVERBS 6:12-19

*Abominable People*

82

## *“Six Things the Lord Hates”*

6. What are the 7 things or 7 kinds of people that “the Lord hates”? Why might He hate these over other sins? What do they have in common?  
*These six things the LORD hates. Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: <sup>1</sup>A proud look, <sup>2</sup>A lying tongue, <sup>3</sup>Hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>4</sup>A heart that devises wicked plans, <sup>5</sup>Feet that are swift in running to evil, <sup>6</sup>A false witness who speaks lies, And <sup>7</sup>one who sows discord among brethren. (6:16-19)*

- Poetic figure of the **whole** body: “look ... tongue ... hands ... heart ... feet”
- Pride cuts a person off from correction, wisdom, and salvation – very destructive to self and others. Do we recognize danger of pride?
- Many of them represent a hardened sinner, a terminal condition.
- The other sins are very destructive toward others.
- Do we feel the same way toward lying and pride that God feels?

85

## “To Keep You From ...”

8. How does God’s commandment and law serve as a “lamp” and a “light”? How do they keep a man from the “evil woman”?  
*For the commandment is a lamp. And the law a light; **Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. (6:23-24)***

- By showing us the **dishonesty** and real **motivation** of the “immoral woman” (her “flattering tongue”), we learn to **not trust** her or be **deceived** by her.
- By learning of her final end and the **destruction** of those seduced by her, we are motivated not to draw even near her door.
- Must be open to correction (“**reproofs of instruction**”); otherwise, death.

88

## Beware the “Wicked Man”

4. What are the characteristics of the “worthless person, a wicked man”?  
*A worthless person, a wicked man, Walks with a perverse mouth; He winks with his eyes, He shuffles his feet, He points with his fingers; **Perversity is in his heart, He devises evil continually. He sows discord. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly: Suddenly, he shall be broken without remedy. (6:12-15)***

- **Worthless** – Without any value, has no good purpose or accomplishment.
- **Dishonest** – Despite appearances, he is entirely dishonest, without integrity.
- **Determined** – Always planning evil, no remorse, no let up, no quarter
- **Divisive** – Looks for ways to actively destroy friendships, unity.
- **Doomed** – His destruction comes without warning and completely

83

## PROVERBS 6:20-35

*To Avoid the Immoral Woman*

86

## Unsuspecting Prey

9. If men are generally physically stronger than women, how can a woman “prey upon his precious life” and reduce him to a “crust of bread”?  
*Do not lust after her beauty in your heart. Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. (6:25-26)*

- An adulteress and harlot will **take, extort, and ruin** a man until he has nothing – not even a crust of bread.
- She will destroy him physically – but even worse – **spiritually**.
- Danger begins when we linger in **looking, staring, imagining** (Matthew 5:27-30; James 1:12-15).
- What is revealed by our speech if we talk about someone’s beauty in detail?

89

## Subtle Wickedness

5. Why does Solomon note that “he winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers”? If you wink, shuffle your feet, or point, are you therefore a “worthless, wicked” person?

- No, this observation implies that he communicates and works evil **subtly**, even with the smallest gestures.
- Attests to **little things** that people may do that the young do not appreciate, but **experienced** people recognizes as indicative of wicked intent.
- **Trust** and learn to **listen** to those older about avoiding certain people that you may think are harmless. Perceived overreactions can be voice of experience.

84

## The Law that Speaks

*My son, keep your father’s command, And do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; When you sleep, they will keep you; And when you awake, they will speak with you. (6:20-22)*

7. How does “your father’s command” and “the law of your mother” “lead you”, “keep you”, and “speak with you”?

- “lead” – Provides direction, instruction, knowledge, wisdom.
- “keep” – Protects, saving you from harm – even when you are asleep. (Many dangerous things could build against you while sleeping, 4:16.)
- “speak” – Through your **conscience** and **memory**, enables you to ask questions and remember answers as if they were physically present (John 8:9; Rom. 2:15).

87

## Playing with Fire

10. How does Solomon answer the thought that someone might flirt with adultery, cozy up to adultery, but yet not commit it? Is there such thing as “just a little” adultery?  
*Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent. (6:27-29)*

- **Very Slippery Slope** – Wording suggests questionable actions inevitably lead to unquestionable guilt.
- **Unavoidable Destruction** – Also suggests that it is **impossible to sample** sexual sins without **devastating consequences**.

90

### Adultery is Stealing?

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband's  fury; Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense. Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts. (6:30-35)

11. How is adultery similar to stealing and yet different?

- Both involve taking what does not belong to you, but belongs to another.
- However, people are somewhat sympathetic to thief, can forgive him after repaying.
- People are not at all sympathetic toward the adulterer:
  - Society will not forget what he has done.
  - Husband cannot be appeased with anything, because of the surpassing value of what was stolen. Nothing will satisfy his  fury but to pour it out entirely.

91

### A Sister's Protection

My son, keep my words, And treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live. And my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister." And call understanding your nearest kin. That they may keep you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words. (7:1-5)

1. How can wisdom be your "sister" and keep you from the "immoral woman"?

- If you walk arm-in-arm with your sister "wisdom" down the street, and an "immoral woman" turns your head, what would your sister do?
- Requires a well-trained and sensitive conscience!
- Again, notice the immoral woman's tool. "flattering words"!

94

### The Easy Immoral Woman

3. What choices did she make, so she would be available, accessible? And there a woman met him, With the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, Her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, Lurking at every corner. (7:10-12)

- **Immodest Dress** – Her dress revealed and communicated that she was easy, what she really wanted.
- **Crafty Heart** – She had worked, learned, and succeeded in being shrewd.
- **Obvious** – Her behavior ensured she would be observed, if not at first seen.
- **Discontent** – She could not be content at home, forsaking her duty at home.
- **Huntress** – Actively looking for prey, "lurking at every corner".
- Everything about her communicates desire to sin – easily, even chasing it.

97

### Sexual Immorality is Stealing!

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband's  fury; Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense. Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts. (6:30-35)

11. How is adultery similar to stealing and yet different?

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

- Sexual immorality uniquely hurts sinner in multitude of ways unlike any other sin.

92

### Chose Wrong Place & Time

2. What early mistakes did the young man make, which set him up to be captured by this woman?

For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, And saw among the simple. I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding. Passing along the street near her corner; And he took the path to her house In the twilight, in the evening, In the black and dark night. (7:6-9)

- Youth cannot be avoided; however, being "devoid of understanding" can be.
- Unintended or not, he was in the wrong place, the "bad part of town".
- Definitely, he was in town at the wrong time, a dangerous, vulnerable time.
- Be wise. Look ahead. Do not set yourself up for temptation and fall ...
- If you play mind games in your heart, you only deceive and hurt yourself!

95

### Reasonable Sin?

4. What was "enticing" about "her speech"? What arguments or reasoning did she use to convince the young man that it would be acceptable, safe, and desirable to yield?

So she caught him and kissed him; With an impudent face she said to him: "I have peace offerings with me; Today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, Diligently to seek your face, And I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, Colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed With myrrh, aloe, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; He has gone on a long journey; He has taken a bag of money with him, And will come home on the appointed day." With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. (7:13-21)

98

## PROVERBS 7:1-27

A Case Study of the Simple Seduced

93

### Chose Wrong Place & Time

2. What early mistakes did the young man make, which set him up to be captured by this woman?

For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, And saw among the simple. I perceived among the youths, A young man devoid of understanding. Passing along the street near her corner; And he took the path to her house In the twilight, in the evening, In the black and dark night. (7:6-9)

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:12-14)

96

### Reasonable Sin?

4. What was "enticing" about "her speech"? What arguments or reasoning did she use to convince the young man that it would be acceptable, safe, and desirable to yield?

- **Body Language** – Grabbed and kissed him with a bold, brazen face.
- **Religious Approval & Security** – Sacrificed peace offerings, paid vows.
- **Personal Importance** – Sought diligently; nobody else could replace him.
- **Pleasurable** – Decorated and perfumed bed, dedicated to the entire night.
- **Physical Security** – Husband is gone. No way for unexpected return.
- The exact words may change, but seduction frequently involves the above elements – flattery and rationalization of conscience's qualms.
- Learn to recognize them! "Flee fornication" when you hear them.

99

**Cooperative Slaughter**

5. How was this young man similar to an ox or bird?  
*Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it would cost his life. (7:22-23)*

- In all 3 examples – and in this case – the prey followed the predator **willingly, ignorantly** – to their death and destruction.
- Sadly, in all of these cases, the predator could not feed on the prey without the prey’s unwitting cooperation. (Prey is physically stronger than predator.)
- Do you want to be like a dumb cow or chicken following the famer to the barn, thinking it’s going to be fed, only to be killed and chopped into food?

100

**PROVERBS 8:1-11**

*Wisdom’s Call*

103

**Wisdom’s Persuasive Speech**

2. How are wisdom’s words and speech different than the immoral woman’s speech?

- Both call to men, especially “simple ones” (7:7, 15).
- Both claim spiritual correctness (“peace offerings, paid vows”, 7:14).
- However, only wisdom:
  - Does not resort to sensual body language.
  - Speaks truthfully.
  - Offers “excellent things ... right things ... truth ... righteousness” – that **help** us!
  - Hates and avoids wickedness!
  - **Does not flatter** – reveals us as we **truly** are: “simple ones ... fools”.
  - Easily understood. Do you **really** know what immorality wants from her words?

106

**Slain a Mighty Host**

6. Is Solomon’s observation that she has slain many strong men offered to comfort – or something else? Explain.  
*Now therefore, listen to me, my children; Pay attention to the words of my mouth: Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths; For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men. (7:24-26)*

- No! This is a strong warning! ... We tend to think we are exceptional, different.
- She has already destroyed many, and they were also strong – but deceived.
- *Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ... Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell: ... Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:6-12; see also, Proverbs 16:18)*

101

**Wisdom’s Stand**

1. How is the setting chosen by wisdom, where she offers her call, different than the immoral woman’s chosen time and location?  
*Does not wisdom cry out, And understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, Beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, At the entrance of the doors (8:1-3)*

- Both are easily seen at times and heard (“at times outside, at times in the open square”, 7:12). Both are **easily accessed** and **difficult to ignore**.
- Wisdom “takes her stand”, while immorality “lurks at every corner”.
- Wisdom’s invitation is **consistently, boldly** offered in the most public places.
- Immorality’s invitation is shamefully offered in secret, dark (John 3:19-21).

104

**Incomparable Wisdom ...**

*Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. (8:10-11)*

3. How can “instruction”, “knowledge”, and “wisdom” be better than “silver”, “choice gold”, “rubies”, and “all the things one may desire”?

For application, in what way is a choice made for one over the other?

- Wisdom provides what money cannot buy – lasting joy, life, and security for both now and life to come.
- Money cannot even provide this confidently for the life now – much less eternity.
- Begins a new section, discussing a new threat – not pleasure – but wealth!

107

**The End of Sexual Sensuality**

7. Why are her house and its room so surprising and so important to understand and remember?  
*Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death. (7:27)*

- Appearances and feelings “in the moment” are fatally misleading.
- Sadly, many know this and wander into her paths anyway. Why? Prevent?
- **Ignorance** – Invest in Bible study, develop wisdom.
- **Disbelief** – Don’t scoff, dismiss. Listen to parents, teachers, elders, preacher.
- **Influences** – Cut off bad influences: friends, movies, internet (1 Cor. 15:33).
- **“Accidental” Overwhelming** – Use wisdom and don’t put yourself in dangerous situations, when you can almost not help but fall (Romans 13:14).
- **“Willful Forgetting”** – Deliberately forgetting to obtain desire (2 Pet. 3:5).
- **Self-discipline** – “sin lies at the door ... rule over it” (Genesis 4:7).

102

**Wisdom’s Persuasive Speech**

*“To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men. O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart. Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; Nothing crooked or perverse is in them. They are all plain to him who understands, And right to those who find knowledge. (8:4-9)*

2. How are wisdom’s words and speech different than the immoral woman’s speech?

105

**PROVERBS 8:12-21**

*The Strength and Wealth of Wisdom*

108

**Wisdom's Power**

4. What virtues does wisdom possess and therefore offer? What does she hate? If we are to be wise, then what should we develop and push from us? *"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence. And find out knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength." (8:12-14)*

- Offers: prudence, discovering knowledge and discretion, counsel, efficient wisdom, understanding, and strength.
- Wisdom's **power** is the development of the **mind** first – truly, the soul.
- **Intelligence** can help to get wisdom, but **spiritual** virtues ("the fear of the Lord") are **far more critical** (Luke 24:25; 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16).
- Must learn to **hate** the same – pride, arrogance, perversity, and the evil way.

109

**The True Rewards of Proverbs**

7. What kind of wealth does wisdom ultimately offer? How does this clarify the type of wisdom and its ultimate goal as used throughout this book?

*Riches and honor are with me. Enduring riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold. And my revenue than choice silver. I traverse the way of righteousness. In the midst of the paths of justice. That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth, That I may fill their treasuries. (8:18-21)*

- Although ultimate wisdom can ease and bless life now, its true rewards are spiritual – surpassing earthly wealth – because they **endure** (Mat. 6:16-24).
- Some think Proverbs is focused on improving **earthly life**, but its **ultimate** goal is providing wisdom that leads to **eternal life**.

112

**Precedence of Wisdom**

9. What is the significance of wisdom being "brought forth" (i.e., born) and "possessed" before the creation of the world?

*The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way. Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting. From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. 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: (Proverbs 8:22-25)*

- Emphasizes wisdom's power by its **precedence** – before the universe!
- Also explains that wisdom is not God – He **possesses** it; it is an inseparable **part** of His nature, but He is not just wisdom. He is **greater** than wisdom.
- "Jehovah's Witnesses" ignore the context and falsely assume this is Jesus.

115

**Examples of Wisdom's Power**

5. Why is it significant – how is it applicable to us that she assists "kings", "princes", "nobles", and "judges" in their rule?

*By me kings reign. And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth. (8:15-16)*

- The most powerful people in the world depend upon wisdom to perform their greatest tasks.
- These examples demonstrate the power of wisdom and its essential need.

110

**PROVERBS 8:22-36**

*The Power of Wisdom*

113

**Wisdom with Men**

10. Besides delighting in the creation of the world, what other work has brought "delight" to wisdom since the beginning?

*Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, Rejoicing in His inhabited world. And my delight was with the sons of men. (8:30-31)*

- Speaks to how God's wisdom in creation was helpful to God's creation, men.
- May imply that God used wisdom to guide the development of men and mankind – that His wisdom is evident in them.
- Also, may imply that men have also recognized the power and usefulness of wisdom in their own creation and work – since God's creation.

116

**Rewards Truthseekers**

6. To receive her blessings, how must one treat wisdom?

*I love those who love me. And those who seek me diligently will find me. (8:17)*

- Although the worldly may acquire some worldly wisdom – maybe even some spiritual wisdom, wisdom's greatest riches are reserved for those who truly **love** wisdom and seek it **diligently** (1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16).
- Lying to one's self, failure to love truth, and poor effort to seek wisdom are guaranteed only destruction they cannot see (2 Thess. 2:9-12; Isa. 66:2-4).
- However, God has promised to gladly help those who seek truth (Matthew 7:7-11; James 1:5). Same thought can warn or be encouraging!
- And, further guaranteed they will find it (Eph. 3:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

111

**God's Demonstration**

8. The fantastic power, potential, and usefulness of wisdom is demonstrated in what amazing act? How does that help us appreciate the value and usefulness of wisdom?

*"The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way. Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting. From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. ... While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primeval dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there. When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him" (8:22-30)*

- If God used wisdom to create the universe, what could we ever seek that is more powerful?
- Wisdom is as old and as established as God Himself. How? Why? Because it's from God! It is **His** nature! Wisdom is part of Him!!!
- As the universe displays God's wisdom in creation (Psalm 104), so the church displays God's wisdom in His second new creation – salvation and redemption (Ephesians 3:8-11).

114

**Follow Wisdom's Every Move**

11. How does one "watch daily" at wisdom's "gates, waiting at the posts" of her "doors"? Can you think of examples of people literally doing this today? How does that help us understand the point and make application?

*"Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me. Watching daily at my gates. Waiting at the posts of my doors." (8:32-34)*

- Like the paparazzi hounding celebrities, we are to follow wisdom's every move, observing and learning from all she does.
- We are to be the children of the faithful mother directed by **Deu. 6:7-9**.
- Wisdom is our mother, faithfully teaching us. Will we be faithful in learning?

117

**Wisdom's Ultimate Reward**

12. What does wisdom ultimately offer? Can we want or ask for anything more?

*For whoever finds me finds life. And obtains favor from the LORD. (8:35)*

- Again attests to spiritual nature, the ultimate goal of wisdom, "favor from the Lord".
- Eternal life and favor from God are the fruit of wisdom.
- Nothing else will ultimately satisfy us. Nothing else could surpass.

118

**The Feast Prepared**

1. What is the point being emphasized in verses 1-3? What is meant by wisdom having "hewn out her seven pillars"?

*Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine, She has also furnished her table. She has sent out her maidens, She cries out from the highest places of the city. (9:1-3)*

- "Seven" *figuratively* represents divine completion, perfection (Gn. 1:30-2:3)
- Pillars support a house; therefore, a *perfectly, divinely* supported house.
- Wisdom has done everything required to provide the *perfect* feast – *for us!*
- She is *ready* – only waiting on us.

121

**Do You Receive Correction Well?**

3. What is the difference between the "wise", "just" man and the "scoffer", the "wicked" man? How does that relate to her invitation and apply to us?

*He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, And he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. (9:7-9)*

- Are *you* wise and just, or a scoffer and wicked?
- Will *you* receive wisdom's correction and accept her invitation?
- Your reaction to correction – how well you receive it and implement it – determines who you truly are.

124

**Lovers of One's Own Death**

*"But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death." (8:36)*

13. How can someone "wrong his own soul"? What does it mean to "love death"?

- The most immediate and significant victim of folly is the fool.
- Mistreating wisdom ultimately results in mistreating one's *own* self.
- To hate wisdom is to necessarily choose and equally love one's own destruction – and the destruction of all those they touch.
- Can you see the end from the beginning? Will you choose wisdom, or disdain and hate it?

119

**Repentance**

2. What is wisdom's invitation? Whom does she invite?

*"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, "Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding." (9:4-6)*

- She invites the simple, those without understanding.
- She invites them to wisdom – correction, repentance, and life!

122

**Wisdom's Foundation**

4. What is the foundation of "wisdom" and "understanding"? Why?

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself. And if you scoff, you will bear it alone." (9:10-12)*

- Only *some* wisdom can be learned from *experience*, learning from living.
- Most wisdom may *not* appear wise *at first*, and it must be accepted by *faith*.
- If one does not respect, believe God, then such a one will not learn sufficient wisdom until it is too late.
- Only God knows the final end from the beginning, and only by listening to Him can we learn the wisdom essential to spiritual life.
- The most affected person by our choice is *ourselves* – not our parents, etc.

125

**PROVERBS 9:1-12**

*Wisdom's Invitation*

120

**Folly of Correcting a Fool**

3. What is the difference between the "wise", "just" man and the "scoffer", the "wicked" man? How does that relate to her invitation and apply to us?

*He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, And he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. (9:7-9)*

- Recognize the distinction, and do not waste your advice where unwanted: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." (Matthew 7:6)
- Don't judge harshly prematurely to the same judgment from God (Mt.7:1-5).

123

**PROVERBS 9:13-18**

*The Immoral Woman's Invitation*

126

### The Foolish Woman's Wisdom

5. What wisdom does the "foolish woman" offer? What does that say about her understanding of her own end?

*A foolish woman is clamorous; She is simple, and knows nothing. (9:13)*

- Nothing – no wisdom. She knows absolutely nothing *useful*.
- Her "simplicity" indicates that she is unaware or uncaring regarding her own destiny; therefore, she cannot begin to help you.
- However, she is "clamorous", implying you cannot miss her; she will not let you simply ignore her.

127

### Who are Wisdom, Immorality?

8. **Thought Question:** What might these two women, *wisdom* and *immorality*, represent?

- **Personification** – Literary device, figuratively speaking of inanimate objects or abstract ideas as people to enhance or deepen understanding.
- **Wisdom** ultimately represents the message and path to joy, peace, and *life*.
- **Immorality** represents the short-sighted pursuit of pleasure, especially sinful pleasure, which ultimately ends in misery, emptiness, and *death*.
- Although these are not literal women, they represent real pursuits, real temptations, and real consequences, which are greater than any single literal woman.

130

### THE GOD OF MEN

Verses: 10:22; 11:20-21,31; 12:2; 14:2,12,14,26-27; 15:3,8-9,11,16,26,29; 16:1-11,20,25,33; 17:3,5,15; 18:10-11; 19:21,23; 20:9-10,12,22-25,27; 21:1-3,27,30-31; 22:4,12; 23:10-11,17-18; 24:11-12,17-22; 27:1,19; 28:5,9,14; 29:13,18,25-26; 30:1-9,21-23

133

### Delight in Forbidden Pleasure?

6. Whom does she invite? What is her invitation?

*For she sits at the door of her house, On a seat by the highest places of the city. To call to those who pass by, Who go straight on their way: "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here"; And as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, "Stolen water is sweet, And bread eaten in secret is pleasant." (9:14-16)*

- Her appeal is to the "simple", at least they are the most susceptible to her.
- However, she is glad to capture anyone "passing by", who were otherwise going "straight on their way". Maybe she delights in destroying the godly?
- Even the "highest places of the city" are not immune to her.
- Her offer is *forbidden pleasure*, asserting it pleases more than the lawful.
- Only *pride, rebellion* derives greater joy partaking in what is forbidden.

128

### Why Women?

9. **Thought Question:** Why might Solomon have personified these pursuits as women as opposed to men?

- One, Solomon was writing to his sons, so a seductive woman versus a wise woman was more directly applicable.
- Two, each of these women represent two attractive, desirable goals, which tends to fit women better than men.
- Three, their power is ultimately in their words, offer, and persuasiveness – not their mighty deeds of physical strength – which better fits women.

131

### Why Trust in God over Man?

1. Why does man need to trust in God to guide him (14:12; 16:1-3, 9, 25; 19:21; 20:24; 30:1-9)?

*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (14:12; 16:25)*

- Man *cannot see* the ultimate consequences of his decisions.

*All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits. (16:2)*

- Man is too often *not honest* with himself on top of his short-sightedness.

*A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. (16:9; 19:21; 20:24)*

- We *control too little* of circumstances compared to God. He's in control.

134

### The Hook

7. Fundamentally and generally, how is the immoral woman's invitation different than that of wisdom?

*"Stolen water is sweet, And bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, That her guests are in the depths of hell. (9:17-18)*

- **Bait-and-Switch** – Invites by offering forbidden pleasure, which is wickedness, but ultimately switches reward for *death* and *hell*.
- Wisdom *transparently, honestly* offers life that helps us, but immorality deceives, destroys, and only serves itself in the long run.
- Her guests are not just on the *edge* but in "the *depths* of hell".

129

### Repetition, Repetition, ...

10. **Thought Question:** Why might Solomon repeated and elaborated so many times on simple lessons?

- People tend to simply forget and need reminding (2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1).
- Important things need repetition for emphasis.
- Complicated concepts need rewording to unlock their mysteries.
- Did you grow tired of the repetition? Or, were you "wise" and learned from it?

132

### Why Trust in God over Man?

1. Why does man need to trust in God to guide him (14:12; 16:1-3, 9, 25; 19:21; 20:24; 30:1-9)?

*The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. ... Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established. (16:1, 3)*

- Preparing our heart, committing ourselves sincerely to God (ex., Daniel 1:8) is our responsibility (1 Peter 3:15).
- Diligently adhering to this commitment will help us organize our thoughts and words – and ultimately our actions.

135

**Why Trust in God over Man?**

1. Why does man need to trust in God to guide him (14:12; 16:1-3, 9, 25; 19:21; 20:24; 30:1-9)?

*Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, If you know? 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 rebuke you, and you be found a liar. (30:1-9)*

- Like Job, we are in no position to question God – infinitely outmatched.
- God wants to help us. Why would we resist Him? How can we improve upon His will for us?

136

**Rash Commitments to God**

3. How important is it to God that we honor our word and keep our commitments, especially to Him (20:25)?

*It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows. (Proverbs 20:25)*

- There is no value – only judgment – in good intentions, unfulfilled promises.
- ...When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed – Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? (Ecclesiastes 5:1-6)

139

**“Who may dwell in Your holy hill?”**

*Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law. (29:18)*

- Men tend to forget God, if He is not in their face. Don't forget Him!
- He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD. (17:15)
- Must be careful not to twist or deny justice.
- To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. (21:3)
- Don't rationalize, justify your sins because you go to church!

142

**Make & Designer of Man**

*The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The LORD has made them both. (20:12)*

2. What is profound about observing that God made both “the hearing ear and the seeing eye” (20:12)? What other passages make similar connections?

- Since God designed and made us, He better knows us, our limitations, and our capabilities than we ever could know.
- Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” So the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?” (Exodus 4:10-11)
- Emphasizes our need for humility, trusting in Him when He commands or directs.

137

**“Who may dwell in Your holy hill?”**

4. What kind of people does God favor and draw toward Him, and what kind does He condemn and push away (12:2; 14:2, 26-27; 16:5, 20; 17:15; 21:3, 27; 22:4; 28:5, 9; 29:18, 25)?

*In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death. (14:26-27)*

*The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe. (29:25)*

- Properly fearing, respecting, revering God – not man – is beginning.
- He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, But he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. (14:2)
- Whether we respect God is a reflection of our estimation of Him.

140

**“Who may dwell in Your holy hill?”**

*A good man obtains favor from the LORD, But a man of wicked intentions He will condemn. (12:2)*

*The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; How much more when he brings it with wicked intent! (21:27)*

- Those who use religion for self, evil are especially abominable!

143

**Rash Commitments to God**

3. How important is it to God that we honor our word and keep our commitments, especially to Him (20:25)?

*It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows. (20:25)*

- There is no value – only judgment – in good intentions, unfulfilled promises.
- Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words. ... (Ecclesiastes 5:1-6)

138

**“Who may dwell in Your holy hill?”**

*By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life. (22:4)*

- Humility is critical. Our own pride is one of our greatest enemies.
- He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he. (16:20)
- If we are wise, then that will be evident in how well we listen to Him.
- One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. (28:9)
- If we won't listen to Him, then He won't listen to us. Fair?
- Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished. (16:5)
- No matter how many people despise and reject God, no matter how many surround us, the mob of the wicked will not overpower or escape God!

141

**Push or Pull?**

5. How does He push them away (15:8-9, 29)? How does He bless those He favors (16:7, 33; 18:10-11; 19:23)?

*The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness. ... The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous. (15:9, 29)*

- Only the righteous' prayers are heard – no help for the wicked.
- When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. (16:7)
- God helps man in many ways – even with his enemies – when seeks God.
- The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. (16:33)
- Even in what seems random, God influences...

144



## What is the Difference?

*Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"?* (20:9)

6. If the righteous also sin, how are they different than the wicked (11:20; 16:6; 20:9)?

• Everyone sins – in this there is no distinction.

*In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity. And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.* (16:6)

• Everyone *may* be forgiven – in this there is also no distinction.

*Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD, But the blameless in their ways are His delight.* (11:20)

• Remedy for sin (1 John 1:6-2:1), but are you justifying continuing it?

• The question is repentance – are we “departing from evil”?

145

## Recompense – Now and Later

*If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner.* (11:31)

*Happy is the man who is always reverent, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.* (28:14)

9. Generally, how will God reward the righteous and wicked – even here on earth (11:31; 28:14; 29:26)? If all is not resolved here on earth, where else might justice be satisfied (23:17-18)? What room does that leave for vengeance in the saint’s life (20:22)?

• Without explanation, a reckoning now is promised for everyone.

• The “recompensation” is not explained. We can, should accept on faith. ...

• Physically, life tends to be easier for the righteous. Spiritual rewards are sure.

148

## Gifts That Bring Sorrow?

*The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.* (10:22)

11. How are God’s gifts different than those that man – or the Devil – might offer (10:22)?

• “Gifts” that the Devil, the world offers deceive and ultimately hurt us, producing painful injury, guilt, and regret (9:13-18; 2 Samuel 11-12).

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* (J.s.1:17)

*I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor – it is the gift of God.* (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13)

• Frees us to enjoy the good gifts without regret, and suspect those that cause it.

151

## The Real You?

7. What represents the real, true “man” or the real you (27:19)? How is this observation helpful?

*As in water face reflects face, So a man’s heart reveals the man.* (27:19)

• Our actions and words eventually reveal our heart, our thoughts.

• These thoughts represent and reveal the real you.

• For example, are you humble (teachable), honest (integrity), wise (respect God), etc.? This is the real you.

• Understanding this helps us to focus on what is important and not disregard critical signs demanding attention, effort, and change.

146

## Recompense – Now and Later

9. Generally, how will God reward the righteous and wicked – even here on earth (11:31; 28:14; 29:26)? If all is not resolved here on earth, where else might justice be satisfied (23:17-18)? What room does that leave for vengeance in the saint’s life (20:22)?

*Many seek the ruler’s favor, But justice for man comes from the LORD.* (29:26)

*Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; For surely there is a hereafter. And your hope will not be cut off.* (23:17-18)

*Do not say, “I will recompense evil”; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.* (20:22)

• If not here, God will make all things right in eternity. Do not avenge self.

149

## Power of the Blanket Shield?

*Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished; But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered.* (11:21)

*There is no wisdom or understanding Or counsel against the LORD. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance is of the LORD.* (21:30-31)

12. Why would the wicked think they could combine forces and overcome God or that the righteous may have been forsaken (11:21; 21:30-31)? Could they hide from God (15:3, 11, 26; 17:3; 20:27; 21:2)?

• Pride maintained in the face of weakness, inferiority requires self-deception.

• Eventually, that self-delusion spreads and grows to impossible heights, lies.

*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good.* (15:3)

*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.* (21:2)

• Self-deception hides & protects one from God like pulling a blanket over your head.

152

## Two Masters?

8. What specific things are referenced as being less important than God’s favor (15:16; 16:8)?

*Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure with trouble.* (15:16)

*Better is a little with righteousness, Than vast revenues without justice.* (16:8)

• No comparison between having wealth of this world versus the world to come (Matthew 6:19-24).

147

## The Perturbed Earth

*For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For <sup>1</sup>a servant when he reigns, <sup>2</sup>a fool when he is filled with food, <sup>3</sup>A hateful woman when she is married, And <sup>4</sup>a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.* (30:21-23)

10. Why would the “earth” be “perturbed” and unable to “bear up” the four things listed by Agur (30:21-23)? Why would we be concerned about the “earth”? Who does the “earth” represent?

• Represents miscarriage of justice:

• Reigning servant and succeeding maidservant are those who supplant others.

• Filled fool and married woman are wicked receiving reward of the righteous.

• The “perturbed earth” represents injustices contrary to the design and witness (judgment) of God (Gen. 4:10-12; Lev. 18:24-30; 20:22-23; Num. 35:31-34; Psa. 106:38; Eze. 36:18; Heb. 12:24). We should care, because He sees, cares.

150

## Boasting about Tomorrow?

13. Why is it foolish to “boast about tomorrow” (27:1)? What other passages touch on this?

*Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.* (27:1)

• Life is not only full of many unexpected turns, it is also surprisingly short. Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (James 4:13-16)

• Opposite symptom of same problem, solution to worrying (Mat. 6:25-34).

153

### God Rules in Kingdom of Men

*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. (21:1)*

14. If God can manipulate the king any way He pleases, who else can He direct (21:1)? What other passages speak of God being in control of the government and its occupants?

- If He can manipulate the world's most powerful men, how will we win against Him?
- Example, God caused Absalom to ignore sound advice, partly due to David's prayer (2 Sam. 15:31-37; 17:1-14).
- Ahab also ignored sound advice from God, choosing false prophets partly because He judged and condemned Him (1 Kings 22:8, 13, 19-38).

*"This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones. In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men." (Daniel 4:17)*

154

### Moving the Ancient Landmark

17. Why would God care about the poor and our treatment of them (17:5; 23:10-11; 29:13)? What other kind of people does God also care that we help and why (24:11-12, 17-22)?

*He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished. (17:5; see also, 29:13)*

- Everyone – even the poor – are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27).
- To despise the poor is to despise the God who made them in His image!

*Do not remove the ancient landmark, Nor enter the fields of the fatherless; For their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you. (23:10-11)*

- Protecting the "widow, fatherless" instead of exploiting them is a reoccurring cause for judgment (Deu. 10:18; 14:29; 24:17-22; Ps. 10:14-18; 68:5; 82:3-4; Is. 1:17, 23; Jer. 5:28-29; 7:6-10; Ez. 22:1-7; Zec. 7:10).

157

### Preserving Truth

18. What distinction does God make between kinds of "knowledge" and "words" (22:12)? What other passages speak of God's similar intervention?

*The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge. But He overthrows the words of the faithless. (22:12)*

- God protects, preserves the ultimate source of knowledge (1 Peter 1:23-25).
- God wills and has determined to highlight the falseness, emptiness of lies and error (Exodus 11:7).

*Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. (2 Timothy 3:8-9)*

160

### Wicked Made for Doom?

*The LORD has made all for Himself. Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom. (16:4)*

15. How could the Lord make even the wicked for Himself (16:4)?

- Three possible ways to understand this, all supported elsewhere:
  - Every person was originally made to serve Him (1 Cor. 6:13; Rom. 3:23).
  - God can and will employ anyone and everyone in His service, even the hard-hearted wicked (e.g., Pharaoh, Exodus 9:13-10:2; Romans 9:17-22).
  - All came from God and ultimately will return Him, stand before Him in judgment – even the wicked unto doom (Revelation 20:10-15; 21:6-8).
- Intended meaning may include or imply all three possibilities.

155

### Moving the Ancient Landmark

17. Why would God care about the poor and our treatment of them (17:5; 23:10-11; 29:13)? What other kind of people does God also care that we help and why (24:11-12, 17-22)?

*"You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." (Exodus 22:22-24)*

- Also remember those "who are drawn toward death ... stumbling to the slaughter", which could be physical, if not surely spiritual (24:11-12, 17-22).

158

### Preserving Truth

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- God protects, preserves the ultimate source of knowledge (1 Peter 1:23-25).
- God wills and has determined to highlight the falseness, emptiness of lies and error (Exodus 11:7).
- Elders and evangelists are especially appointed to this task (Titus 1:9-13), although all have responsibility.

161

### God of the Marketplace?

16. Why would God be interested in weights, scales (11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23)?

*Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight. (11:1)*

*Honest weights and scales are the LORD'S; All the weights in the bag are His work. (16:11)*

*Diverse weights are an abomination to the LORD, And dishonest scales are not good. (20:23, 10)*

- Even in small things, dishonesty can be manifested.
- Such dishonesty injures and steals typically from those most needing.
- God is watching even in these small cases, accumulating judgment.
- Be careful not to dismiss sins as small, unimportant.

156

### Moving the Ancient Landmark

*Deliver those who are drawn toward death. And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? ...Do not rejoice when your enemy falls. And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him. And He turn away His wrath from him. Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked; For there will be no prospect for the evil man; The lamp of the wicked will be put out. My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two can bring? (24:11-22)*

- Mercy toward enemies, spiritually weak is required (Ex. 23:4; Mt. 5:43-48).

159

### WISDOM AND FOLLY

Verses: 10:8, 17; 11:14, 30; 12:1, 15-16, 23; 13:1, 13-16, 20; 14:1, 6-8, 18, 24, 33; 15:7, 21-22, 24; 16:16, 21-24; 17:10, 12, 16, 24; 18:2-4, 15; 19:8, 20, 25, 27, 29; 20:5, 15, 18; 21:11, 16, 22; 22:3, 17-21; 23:9, 12, 23; 24:3-7, 13-14; 26:3-12; 27:3, 12, 22; 28:26

162

**Foresight**

1. What fundamental behavior of the wise preserves them (21:16; 22:3; 27:12)?  
*A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself. But the simple pass on and are punished.* (22:3; 27:12)  
*A man who wanders from the way of understanding Will rest in the assembly of the dead.* (21:16)

- Wisdom is foresight – understanding, foreseeing the end from the beginning.
- Are you *deliberately* looking down the road, trying to understand consequences of decisions – not “wandering” aimlessly without thought?
- Are you listening to others who have already been down that road?
- Have you heard God’s Word, foreseen evil, and “passed on” (Jms.1:19-24)?
- Have you “hidden yourself” from evil once or twice, and then stopped?

163

**Seeking Correction**

2. What fates await those who receive instruction versus those resistant to it (10:8, 17; 12:1; 13:13-15; 14:18, 24; 16:21; 17:10; 19:20, 25, 27, 29; 21:11; 26:3, 10)? Why do we struggle following such obvious wisdom (12:15; 15:21; 16:22; 26:12)? How can we overcome such stumbling blocks (13:1; 15:24; 19:8)?

*Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, But a man of understanding walks uprightly.* (15:21)  
*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes. But he who heeds counsel is wise.* (12:15)  
*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.* (26:12)

- Folly brings short-term joy, pleasure. *Arrogance, pride* rationalizes it.

166

**Waging War!**

4. What do the wise recognize about themselves, and with what do they therefore surround themselves (11:14; 20:18; 24:5-6)? What adverse fate awaits those who do otherwise (13:20; 15:22; 17:12; 28:26)? Why is this difficult to practice?  
*Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.* (11:14)  
*A wise man is strong. Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength; For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.* (24:5-6)

- *Humility*, recognition of one’s own limited knowledge surrounds one’s self with many wise advisors – your peers don’t count (1 Kings 12:1-16).
- “Wage war”? Are we not at war – *spiritually* (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:10-18)?

169

**Seeking Correction**

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*The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall.* (10:8)  
*He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray.* (10:17)  
*Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.* (12:1)

- Fundamental virtue of wisdom is *humility, teachability* – else *folly, doom*.

164

**Seeking Correction**

2. What fates await those who receive instruction versus those resistant to it (10:8, 17; 12:1; 13:13-15; 14:18, 24; 16:21; 17:10; 19:20, 25, 27, 29; 21:11; 26:3, 10)? Why do we struggle following such obvious wisdom (12:15; 15:21; 16:22; 26:12)? How can we overcome such stumbling blocks (13:1; 15:24; 19:8)?

*The way of life winds upward for the wise, That he may turn away from hell below.* (15:24)  
*He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; He who keeps understanding will find good.* (19:8)

- *Loving* spiritual life, our own *soul* more than the esteem of others (i.e., *pride*) combined with *humility* (i.e., *teachability*) will help us overcome (Matthew 10:28-33; John 12:42-43).

167

**Persistence in Seeking Advice**

5. What may be required to access the counsel and wisdom we seek (20:5)?  
*Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out.* (20:5)

- Wise counselors can be reluctant to offer their advice! Why?  
 • Correcting scoffers and fools is ineffective and injures the wise. *More later ...*
- Some wisdom can be twisted, abused, misused by those with evil intent.
- Some people get their feelings hurt easily – *pride* is preventing correction.
- Understanding some advanced wisdom requires understanding other things first.
- Maybe giving you time is inconvenient for them (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8)?
- You must allay all of their fears before they will share such “*deep*” advice.
- Can you build trust – prove yourself receptive, noble, loving, mature?
- Which of these reasons might also limit God’s offering of wisdom to us?

170

**Seeking Correction**

2. What fates await those who receive instruction versus those resistant to it (10:8, 17; 12:1; 13:13-15; 14:18, 24; 16:21; 17:10; 19:20, 25, 27, 29; 21:11; 26:3, 10)? Why do we struggle following such obvious wisdom (12:15; 15:21; 16:22; 26:12)? How can we overcome such stumbling blocks (13:1; 15:24; 19:8)?

*Rebuke is more effective for a wise man Than a hundred blows on a fool.* (17:10)

- Fools simply *cannot* learn – no matter how many times their struck for folly.
- Strike a *scoffer*, and the simple will become *wary*; *Rebuke one who has understanding, and he will discern knowledge.* (19:25)
- If you are “*simple*” (1:1), learn from the mistakes of others.

165

**Prejudice, Self-Deceit**

3. What barriers does the foolish man erect, blocking his path to wisdom and understanding (14:6-8; 17:16, 24; 18:1-2)?

*A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it. But knowledge is easy to him who understands. Go from the presence of a foolish man, When you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way. But the folly of fools is deceit.* (14:6-8)

- Lying to one’s self, intellectual dishonesty, self-deceit, self-delusion are tremendous barriers to the fool and scoffer.
- Implies prejudice, dishonesty in “*seeking*” wisdom – not genuinely seeking.
- Inconsistency, hypocrisy indicates remnants of a conscience – need to satisfy conscience by at least trying, but disingenuous enough to lie to self.

168

**Building a House?**

*The wise woman builds her house. But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.* (14:1)  
*Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches.* (24:3-4)

6. Do the foolish literally pull down their own house with their own hands (14:1)? To what house does this verse and related passages refer (24:3-4)?

- A “*house*” is not necessarily limited to a literal dwelling (2 Samuel 7:7-18; 2 Kings 8:18, 27; 9:7-9).
- Like a literal “*house*” that one leaves to his children, the figurative “*house*” represents all left as an inheritance: children themselves, knowledge, wisdom, reputation, position, wealth, and so forth – *everything* he built.
- What “*house*” are *you* building? Destroying or adding on house given you?

171

**Better to Get Wisdom than ...**

7. Wisdom and understanding are better than what other valuables (16:16; 20:15; 21:22)? How can this be true? How should this affect our observable behavior (15:14; 18:15; 22:17-18; 23:12, 23; 24:13-14)?

How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. (16:16)

A wise man scales the city of the mighty. And brings down the trusted stronghold. (21:22)

- Better than the greatest wealth and most fortified city.
- Two reasons: 1) Spiritual over physical 2) Wisdom brings wealth, strength.
- If you genuinely understand this, then you will trade everything else for it – your decisions and words will reflect this priority.

172

**Tree of Life?**

10. Why would wisdom drive a man to proclaim it (11:30; 16:21, 23-24; 18:4; 22:19-21)? What will he do to make his teaching as effective as possible? Can you think of other Bible verses that touch on this topic?

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. And he who wins souls is wise. (11:30; also, 18:4)

<sup>1</sup>So that your trust may be in the LORD; I have instructed you today, even you. Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and knowledge,  
<sup>2</sup>That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth. <sup>3</sup>That you may answer words of truth To those who send to you? (22:19-21)

- To help others trust in the Lord with certainty and be able to answer others.
- If we love the Lord, we will love what he loves (Pro. 14:31; Jn. 21:15-22).

175

**When to Answer a Fool?**

12. What possible harm could come from "speaking in the hearing of a fool" (23:9; 26:4; 27:3, 22)? Under what circumstances should we "answer a fool" anyway (26:5)? What other Bible passages provide similar advice?

Answer a fool according to his folly. Lest he be wise in his own eyes. (26:5)

- Some fools merit correction, for their benefit and everyone watching.

Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, Yet his foolishness will not depart from him. (27:22)

- Cannot help some people. They just won't listen no matter how hard you try.

178

**Indicators of a Fool**

8. Summarize the observable differences between the general behavior of the wise and fools as provided in these references: 13:16; 14:33; 15:7; 26:11.

Every prudent man acts with knowledge, But a fool lays open his folly. (13:16)

Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding, But what is in the heart of fools is made known. (14:33)

- Fools cannot help but reveal their folly. They have no discretion.

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge. But the heart of the fool does not do so. (15:7)

- Wise can teach and offer wisdom. Fools have no such ability.

As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly. (26:11)

- Fools cannot learn. They repeat their mistakes.

173

**Tree of Life?**

10. Why would wisdom drive a man to proclaim it (11:30; 16:21, 23-24; 18:4; 22:19-21)? What will he do to make his teaching as effective as possible? Can you think of other Bible verses that touch on this topic?

The wise in heart will be called prudent, And sweetness of the lips increases learning. ...The heart of the wise teaches his mouth. And adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. (16:21, 23-24)

- Furthermore, the wise work and learn how to teach more effectively (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Colossians 4:6).
- How about you? Are you a "tree of life"? What do you offer others?

176

**When to Answer a Fool?**

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Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words. (23:9)

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, But a fool's wrath is heavier than both of them. (27:3)

- Hardened fools will not listen. Correcting them only hurts you (Mat. 7:6).

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. (26:4)

- Desperation to help some fools reveals that we may be the fool.
- Learn when to walk away ... (Mat. 7:6; 1 Cor. 5:3-13; 1 John 5:14-16).

179

**Fool's Careless Wrath**

9. Whose shame do the wise "conceal" and why (12:16, 23)? How is this different than the fool?

A fool's wrath is known at once. But a prudent man covers shame. ... A prudent man conceals knowledge. But the heart of fools proclaims foolishness. (12:16-23)

- The fool revealing his wrath is contrasted ("but") with covering shame.
- Therefore, the wise restrain themselves instead of publicly displaying anger, revealing someone's shameful mistake.
- The wise know when to hide something shameful (e.g., a private sin, repented and fixed privately).
- But, if injured, the fool will reveal it to all – without concern for the other.

174

**The Fool's Advice?**

11. What are fools incapable of doing (24:7; 26:7, 9)?

Like the legs of the lame that hang limp Is a proverb in the mouth of fools. ... Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard Is a proverb in the mouth of fools. (26:7, 9)

Wisdom is too lofty for a fool; He does not open his mouth in the gate. (24:7)

- Fools do not understand wisdom, and therefore they cannot offer it.
- When they try, it is a clumsy spectacle – more likely to injure themselves.
- Consequently, they cannot really participate in the discussions of the wise, and may remain quiet out of sheer awkwardness and embarrassment.

177

**RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WICKEDNESS**

Verses: 10:2-3,6-7,16,23-25,27-30;11:4-8,10,18-19,23,27;12:3,7,12-14,21,28;13:5-6,9,21-22,25;14:9,11,14,19,22,32;15:5-6;16:17,31;17:19;19:16;21:7,15,18,21;24:1-2,8-10;25:26;28:1,10,12,18,28;29:6,10,16,27

180

**Treasures along the Paths**

1. What "treasures" does wickedness and sin offer, and in contrast, what treasure does "righteousness" offer (10:2-3, 6, 24, 28-30; 11:23, 27; 12:14, 21, 28; 13:25; 14:19, 32; 16:17, 31; 29:16)? What is the end of each path? *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing. But righteousness delivers from death. The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish. But He casts away the desire of the wicked. ... Blessings are on the head of the righteous. But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.* (10:2-3, 6)

- God takes care of the righteous, now and in eternity.
- Wicked don't even get a chance to speak in their defense (Esther 7:7-10).

*A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth. And the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him.* (12:14)

- Righteous have joy and peace, while wicked live with fear, dread.

181

**The Salvation of the Wicked**

4. In what things may the wicked mistakenly place their confidence, and what will be the sure confidence of the righteous (11:4; 12:3; 14:11; 15:6; 28:1)? *A man is not established by wickedness. But the root of the righteous cannot be moved.* (12:3)

*Riches do not profit in the day of wrath. But righteousness delivers from death.* (11:4)

- Neither the schemes nor wealth of the wicked can save them.
- The wicked flee when no one pursues. But the righteous are bold as a lion. (28:1)
- Wickedness is spiritually, psychologically unsettling, producing paranoia ("be sure your sin will find you out", Numbers 32:23).

184

**Ironic Tool of Retribution**

5. What mechanism ironically destroys the wicked and blesses the righteous (11:5-6, 8, 18-19; 12:13; 13:6, 21-22; 17:19; 21:7; 28:10; 29:6)? *The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips. But the righteous will come through trouble.* (12:13)

*The violence of the wicked will destroy them, Because they refuse to do justice.* (21:7)

- Deeds have natural consequences. Character limits behavior, preventing wicked from doing things necessary to save them from their consequences. *Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, He himself will fall into his own pit; But the blameless will inherit good.* (28:10)
- Balaam sought wrath upon Israelites, but found it himself (Num. 31:8-17).

187

**The End of the Wicked**

2. When and to what extent do the wicked suffer their end (10:25, 27; 12:7; 13:9; 21:12; 28:18)? *When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more. But the righteous has an everlasting foundation.* (10:25)

*The fear of the LORD prolongs days. But the years of the wicked will be shortened.* (10:27)

*The righteous God wisely considers the house of the wicked, Overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness.* (21:12)

- Quickly, suddenly, completely the wicked are destroyed – sooner rather than later. And, it gets worse from there ...

182

**The Salvation of the Wicked**

4. In what things may the wicked mistakenly place their confidence, and what will be the sure confidence of the righteous (11:4; 12:3; 14:11; 15:6; 28:1)? *In the house of the righteous there is much treasure, But in the revenue of the wicked is trouble.* (15:6)

*The house of the wicked will be overthrown, But the tent of the upright will flourish.* (14:11)

- The salvation, hope, and trust of the wicked actually destroys them.
- But, the righteous can enjoy confidence, "flourishing", posterity here, and eternal life.

185

**Ironic Tool of Retribution**

5. What mechanism ironically destroys the wicked and blesses the righteous (11:5-6, 8, 18-19; 12:13; 13:6, 21-22; 17:19; 21:7; 28:10; 29:6)? *The righteous is delivered from trouble, And it comes to the wicked instead.* (11:8)

*Evil pursues sinners, But to the righteous, good shall be repaid. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.* (13:21-22)

- Often consequences are swapped through God's intervention. *By transgression an evil man is snared, But the righteous sings and rejoices.* (29:6)
- Beautiful picture of the righteous marching confidently (2 Chr. 20:1-24).

188

**Faltering of the Righteous**

3. When a righteous man "falters", he is comparable to what (25:26)? What does this mean? *A righteous man who falters before the wicked Is like a murky spring and a polluted well.* (25:26)

- These polluted sources of fresh water not only are literally unclear, they offer a false, disappointing hope of quenching, satisfying thirst.
- Such events are confusing for onlookers, giving false hope to the evil and discouragement to the righteous.
- When undeserved the "earth is disturbed" (30:21-23), but when we deserve it, we bring great discouragement to God's people and encouragement to His enemies (2 Samuel 12:14).

183

**Ironic Tool of Retribution**

5. What mechanism ironically destroys the wicked and blesses the righteous (11:5-6, 8, 18-19; 12:13; 13:6, 21-22; 17:19; 21:7; 28:10; 29:6)? *Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, But wickedness overthrows the sinner.* (13:6)

*The wicked man does deceptive work, But he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. As righteousness leads to life, So he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.* (11:18-19)

*The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright, But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright will deliver them, But the unfaithful will be caught by their lust.* (11:5-6)

- Wickedness destroys the wicked; righteousness saves – but, how?

186

**Wicked Save the Righteous?**

6. Ironically, how do the wicked often help the righteous (21:18)? *The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous. And the unfaithful for the upright.* (21:18)

- Scriptures are filled with examples of wicked – because of their own evil designs and desires – either saving the righteous from harm or stepping in the path of the trouble coming to the righteous, often costing their own lives.
- Abner uniting Saul's army with David to be killed by Joab (2 Samuel 3).
- Joab wiping out both Ahab's house and Baal (2 Kings 9-10).
- One foreign nation destroying another threatening Israel (Babylon → Assyria, Persia → Babylon, Rome → Greece, ...).
- Jews rejecting and sacrificing Jesus for our sins (Romans 11:7-15).

189

**Motivation of the Wicked**

7. Why are the wicked evil (10:23; 12:12; 13:5; 14:9, 14; 19:16; 21:7, 15; 24:1-2)?

*To do evil is like sport to a fool. But a man of understanding has wisdom. (10:23)*

*Fools mock at sin. But among the upright there is favor. (14:9)*

*It is a joy for the just to do justice. But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity. (21:15)*

*A righteous man hates lying, But a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame. (13:5)*

*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways. But a good man will be satisfied from above. (14:14)*

- Succinctly, because they want to be that way!
- Each enjoys their chosen way and hates their rejected way.

190

**Weakness & Strength**

8. How far ahead do the wicked think and plan (11:7)? What tools do the people on the two paths employ in executing what they have "devised" (14:22; 24:8-10)?

*He who plots to do evil Will be called a schemer. The devising of foolishness is sin, And the scoffer is an abomination to men. (24:8-9)*

- Wicked rely upon their own devising of evil, foolishness, and sin.
- They use scoffing to dismiss wisdom and righteousness.

*Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good. (14:22)*

- Righteous "devise" according to God's prescription, employing conviction.

*If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. (24:10)*

193

**The Feeling is Mutual**

11. How do the righteous and wicked feel toward those who are firmly grounded on the other path (29:10, 27)?

*The bloodthirsty hate the blameless. But the upright seek his well-being. ... An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous. And he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked. (29:10, 27)*

- Although innocence, naivety may overlook the incompatibilities of the other, eventually the differences become so clear, so dividing, so deliberate, so undeniable that strong feelings develop for those on the other side.
- Christians must be cautious to not let their hatred for wickedness form premature judgments against the ignorant, always allowing room for repentance (Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:17-21).

196

**Motivation of the Wicked**

7. Why are the wicked evil (10:23; 12:12; 13:5; 14:9, 14; 19:16; 21:7, 15; 24:1-2)?

*He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, But he who is careless of his ways will die. (19:16)*

- Failure to deliberately consider and choose is a choice, representing desire!

*Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them; For their heart devises violence, And their lips talk of troublemaking. (24:1-2)*

*The wicked covet the catch of evil men. But the root of the righteous yields fruit. (12:12)*

- Innocent and righteous are in danger of being allured by the immediate, short-term rewards of the wicked. Be content (4:25-27).

191

**A Difficult Path?**

*The labor of the righteous leads to life, The wages of the wicked to sin. (10:16)*

9. In what ways are both paths (righteousness and wickedness) both easy and hard (10:16)?

- Although filled with many blessings in this life, the righteous must work to be righteous, stay righteous – fighting temptation and discouragement.
- Although the wicked may find immediate, short-term enjoyment, they face unforeseen consequences – now and in eternity, which they vainly hope to avoid if even considered.
- Compare and contrast: Matthew 11:28-30 versus 7:13-14; 10:30-38; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-17

194

**PRIDE AND HUMILITY**

Verses: 11:2, 13, 10, 18; 14:3, 16; 15:5, 10, 12, 25, 31-33; 16:18-19; 18:12; 20:6, 21-4; 25:27; 27:2, 8; 28:13, 25; 29:23; 30:13

197

**Weakness & Strength**

8. How far ahead do the wicked think and plan (11:7)? What tools do the people on the two paths employ in executing what they have "devised" (14:22; 24:8-10)?

*When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish. And the hope of the unjust perishes. (11:7)*

- Have not thought past the short-term, immediate reward of their wickedness.
- Taken no thought of life beyond death, which limits their possible reward.
- Represents fundamental weakness, oversight of the wicked.

192

**Notoriety of Righteous, Wicked**

10. What esteem, honor, and love do the wicked enjoy in contrast with the righteous (11:10; 21:21; 28:12, 28)?

*He who follows righteousness and mercy Finds life, righteousness, and honor. (21:21)*

*When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; And when the wicked perish, there is jubilation. (11:10)*

*When the righteous rejoice, there is great glory; But when the wicked arise, men hide themselves. ...When the wicked arise, men hide themselves; But when they perish, the righteous increase. (28:12, 28)*

- The success of the righteous brings blessings and help to all.
- However, the wicked drive people into hiding, oppression & suffering.
- When the wicked die, people always rejoice!

195

**"If He Gains the Whole World ..."**

*Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud. (16:19)*

1. How is humility greater than riches and "spoil" (16:19)?

- Humility enables one to learn, especially from others, even if their words are not the most gracious.
- Humility implies teachability!
- Pride prevents one from learning and changing, which implies inevitable doom.
- If one cannot avoid doom in this life or the next, what good are all the riches in the world (Matthew 16:26)?

198

**The Fruits of Pride, Humility**

2. Contrast the fruits of pride versus humility (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18; 18:12; 21:4; 22:4; 25:6-7; 28:13, 25)? How do these two attitudes produce these results?

*By pride comes nothing but strife. But with the well-advised is wisdom. (13:10)*

*He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife. But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered. (28:25)*

- The pride are never wrong, always the victim, and entirely inflexible; therefore, conflict is inevitable – only a matter of time.

199

**The Fruits of Pride, Humility**

2. Contrast the fruits of pride versus humility (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18; 18:12; 21:4; 22:4; 25:6-7; 28:13, 25)? How do these two attitudes produce these results?

*A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin. (21:4)*

*He who covers his sins will not prosper. But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. (28:13)*

- Pride inevitably leads to sin.
- Only the humble are willing to admit their failures and turn from the path they have chosen, which enables mercy and forgiveness.
- The proud can only try to conceal their sin, which remains and will eventually destroy them (Numbers 32:23).

202

**“Pride Goes Before ...”**

4. If we are humble, how should we react to trouble and temptation, but if we are proud, how will we react instead (14:16; 27:8)?

*A wise man fears and departs from evil. But a fool rages and is self-confident. (14:16)*

*Like a bird that wanders from its nest Is a man who wanders from his place. (27:8)*

- The proud never question or doubt themselves, setting themselves up ...
- Angrily they dismiss doubts, challenges, concerns and trust in themselves to overcome evil in all of its forms – temptation, destruction, shame, ...
- In so doing, they foolishly wander from their place of security, making themselves vulnerable – spiritually and otherwise.
- May also result in people wandering out of their roles (Jude 6-7).

205

**The Fruits of Pride, Humility**

2. Contrast the fruits of pride versus humility (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18; 18:12; 21:4; 22:4; 25:6-7; 28:13, 25)? How do these two attitudes produce these results?

*Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty. And before honor is humility. (18:12)*

*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. (16:18)*

- For the same reasons, conflict with his fellow men or the world will eventually overpower and destroy the proud.
- However, the humble inevitably learn, grow, prosper and are honored for it.
- When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom. (11:2)
- Shame naturally follows the failure, destruction following pride.

200

**The Fruits of Pride, Humility**

2. Contrast the fruits of pride versus humility (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18; 18:12; 21:4; 22:4; 25:6-7; 28:13, 25)? How do these two attitudes produce these results?

*By humility and the fear of the LORD Are riches and honor and life. (22:4)*

*The LORD will destroy the house of the proud, But He will establish the boundary of the widow. (15:25)*

- The proud are not only contrary to their fellow men and creation. They also oppose their Creator and are targeted by Him for destruction.
- But, the humble listen to God and are blessed by Him.
- These fruits are not assigned penalties, punishments. They are inseparable, inevitable consequences of one’s character manifested in actions.

203

**Reaction to Correction?**

5. Contrast the reaction of the humble and proud to correction (13:18; 15:5, 10, 12, 31-33)? Why do the proud struggle so with correction?

*A fool despises his father’s instruction. But he who receives correction is prudent. (15:5)*

*A scuffer does not love one who corrects him, Nor will he go to the wise. (15:12)*

- Pride not only makes one hate correction, it also causes him to dislike those who offer it and avoid them.
- How do you feel towards parents, elders, teachers, coaches, etc.?

206

**The Fruits of Pride, Humility**

2. Contrast the fruits of pride versus humility (11:2; 13:10; 15:25; 16:18; 18:12; 21:4; 22:4; 25:6-7; 28:13, 25)? How do these two attitudes produce these results?

*Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of the great; For it is better that he say to you, “Come up here,” Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen. (25:6-7)*

- Like the Pharisees jockeying for the position of “best seats” at the feasts (Luke 14:7-11; Matthew 23:5-6; Mark 12:38-40), we may exalt ourselves, only to be humiliated. Better to be humble than exalted.

201

**A Rod of Pride?**

3. How does the tongue of a fool serve as a “rod of pride” (14:3)? In contrast, how does humility preserve the wise?

*In the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride, But the lips of the wise will preserve them. (14:3)*

- “Rods” are used to beat and correct people (23:13-14).
- May refer to something that grows from insignificance (Isa. 11:1; Jms. 3:5).
- Fools use their words to beat other people, hurt them, because of their pride.
- Ironically, their words may be used to beat, correct them (Mat. 12:34-37)!
- However, the words of the wise deliver them from such condemnation. In their words, they demonstrate humility, wisdom, justice, righteousness, etc.
- This judgment will occur both on heaven and earth ...

204

**Reaction to Correction?**

5. Contrast the reaction of the humble and proud to correction (13:18; 15:5, 10, 12, 31-33)? Why do the proud struggle so with correction?

*Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction. But he who regards a rebuke will be honored. (13:18)*

*Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, And he who hates correction will die. (15:10)*

- Ironically, disdaining correction only leads to harsher correction – verbally, financially, reputation – ultimately death.
- The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise. He who disdains instruction despises his own soul. But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, And before honor is humility. (15:31-33)

207

**Ultimate Honor?**

6. What do the proud seek instead (20:6; 25:27; 27:2)? How and where is the goal of pride rightly satisfied, and what does it often ironically also produce (29:23)?  
*Most men will proclaim each his own goodness. But who can find a faithful man? (20:6)*  
*It is not good to eat much honey; So to seek one's own glory is not glory. (25:27)*  
*Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips. (27:2)*

- Praising yourself typically brings humiliation. Not sustainable honor.
- A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor. (29:23)
- Humility leads to honor here, but true, ultimate honor comes from the Lord. Only that will satisfy us (Mat. 25:21, 23; Rom. 2:5-10; Ecc. 3:11; 12:13-14).
- Nothing wrong with seeking honor. The question is whose honor, esteem, and approval are we seeking? That identity reveals our true God!

208

**End of Integrity, Dishonesty**

1. Contrast the definite end of the honest with integrity versus the perverse who twist and lie (10:9; 11:3; 12:8, 19-20; 17:20; 19:5, 9; 21:6; 22:5, 11; 28:6; 29:24).

*He who walks with integrity walks securely. But he who perverts his ways will become known. (10:9)*  
*A man will be commended according to his wisdom, But he who is of a perverse heart will be despised. (12:8)*  
*The integrity of the upright will guide them. But the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. (11:3)*

- Integrity brings security, commendation and honor, but the one who twists the truth will be exposed, despised, and destroyed!

211

**End of Integrity, Dishonesty**

1. Contrast the definite end of the honest with integrity versus the perverse who twist and lie (10:9; 11:3; 12:8, 19-20; 17:20; 19:5, 9; 21:6; 22:5, 11; 28:6; 29:24).

*Getting treasures by a lying tongue Is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. (21:6)*

- Greed and deceit always produce sudden death, even if unforeseen.
- *Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards his soul will be far from them. (22:5)*
- Integrity requires careful "guarding of his soul". Does not come easily (Job 2:3, 9; 4:6; 27:5).

214

**My Generation?**

7. What other sins accompany the "generation" that is given over to pride, and what end can they expect (30:12-17)?

*There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes. Yet is not washed from its filthiness. There is a generation – oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, And the needy from among men. The leech has two daughters – Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, Four never say, "Enough!": The grave, The barren womb, The earth that is not satisfied with water – And the fire never says, "Enough!" The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it. (30:12-17)*

- Have you seen this generation? Does its mob size justify it?
- Although not numbered among the 4, they fit well in terrible things never satisfied!

209

**End of Integrity, Dishonesty**

1. Contrast the definite end of the honest with integrity versus the perverse who twist and lie (10:9; 11:3; 12:8, 19-20; 17:20; 19:5, 9; 21:6; 22:5, 11; 28:6; 29:24).

*The truthful lip shall be established forever. But a lying tongue is but for a moment. Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But counselors of peace have joy. (12:19-20)*  
*He who has a deceitful heart finds no good. And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil. (17:20)*

- Although lying may indeed bring temporary reward, ultimately it destroys.
- Truthfulness, spoken and in the heart, establishes one and brings joy.

212

**End of Integrity, Dishonesty**

1. Contrast the definite end of the honest with integrity versus the perverse who twist and lie (10:9; 11:3; 12:8, 19-20; 17:20; 19:5, 9; 21:6; 22:5, 11; 28:6; 29:24).

*He who loves purity of heart And has grace on his lips, The king will be his friend. (22:11)*  
*Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich. (28:6)*

- Rewards of integrity are the highest honors, surpassing riches.

215

**HONESTY, INTEGRITY  
 VERSUS LIES, PERVERSITY**

Verses: 10:9; 11:3; 12:5-6; 12:8, 17-20, 22; 14:5, 15, 25; 17:20; 18:1; 19:1-3, 5, 9, 28; 20:7, 14; 21:6, 8, 29; 22:5, 11; 24:28-29; 26:18-19; 27:5-6; 28:6, 23; 29:1, 24; 30:10, 12

210

**End of Integrity, Dishonesty**

1. Contrast the definite end of the honest with integrity versus the perverse who twist and lie (10:9; 11:3; 12:8, 19-20; 17:20; 19:5, 9; 21:6; 22:5, 11; 28:6; 29:24).

*Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life; He swears to tell the truth, but reveals nothing. (29:24)*

- Friendship among liars and thieves is temporary. Care only for themselves. *A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who speaks lies will not escape. (19:5, 9)*
- May appear that deceivers, liars escape, but ultimately they will be caught.

213

**God's Judgment**

2. Contrast God's judgment of those who speak lies versus truth (12:22).

*Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight. (12:22)*

- Do you want God to find you disgusting, abominable?
- Or, would you rather Him "delight" in you?
- Seek truth and integrity!

216



**As a Man Thinks in His Heart ...**

3. How are the righteous and wicked similar and yet very different in their thoughts and words (12:5-6)?

The thoughts of the righteous are right, But the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. The words of the wicked are, "Lie in wait for blood." But the mouth of the upright will deliver them. (12:5-6)

- For both, their words originate from their heart, manifesting true character.
- However, righteous speak saving truth, whereas wicked speak murderous lies.
- Remember, one may murder *spiritually* through lies (John 8:44; Genesis 3).

217

**Dependable Witness**

5. Contrast how many lies a "faithful witness" tells with how many one must tell to be a "false witness" (14:5)?

A faithful witness **does not lie**, But a false witness will utter lies. (14:5)

- A true, loyal, dependable, faithful witness *never* lies!
- It only takes one lie to be a false witness, destroying our dependability.
- Self-deluded if we think, "it was only one small white lie".
- Do you always tell the truth? Do you excuse an occasional lie?

220

**Why So Gullible?**

7. Why are people of integrity *not* so gullible (14:15)? How does this affect our openness to correction or flattery (27:5-6; 28:23; 29:1)?

The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps. (14:15)

- Gullibility arises from *naivety or desire to believe* what is said.
- Because the prudent guard their hearts and choices, they are more careful and therefore protected from both, especially desire to believe a lie.
- Consider how easily Eve was deceived (Genesis 3:1-6; James 1:14-15) – because she wanted to believe, motivated by her desires.

223

**Effects of Our Words**

4. Contrast the effect of spoken truth versus lies upon its hearers (12:17-18; 14:25; 19:28; 20:7). How does knowing this help us to be honest and speak truth?

He who speaks truth declares righteousness. But a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword. But the tongue of the wise promotes health. (12:17-18)

A true witness delivers souls, But a deceitful witness speaks lies. (14:25)

A disreputable witness scorns justice. And the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity. (19:28)

- Truth saves and helps others, but lies hurt terribly, perverting justice.

218

6. List some characteristics of a "perverse" man (19:1-3; 21:8, 29; 30:12). What New Testament passages warn against similar attitudes and consequences?

The way of a guilty man is perverse; But as for the pure, his work is right. (21:8)

- How does a man move from innocence to guilt, impurity? Twisting the truth!

221

**Why So Gullible?**

7. Why are people of integrity *not* so gullible (14:15)? How does this affect our openness to correction or flattery (27:5-6; 28:23; 29:1)?

Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. (27:5-6)

He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward Than he who flatters with the tongue. (28:23)

- Flattery works because people want to believe the compliments.
- People of integrity know who they are, & they are careful in self-promotion. He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. (29:1)
- In the extreme, people will not hear rebuke that shatters their self-delusion.

224

**Effects of Our Words**

4. Contrast the effect of spoken truth versus lies upon its hearers (12:17-18; 14:25; 19:28; 20:7). How does knowing this help us to be honest and speak truth?

The righteous man walks in his integrity: His children are blessed after him. (20:7)

- Integrity brings blessings not only upon others – but specifically – upon our children.
- Motivated to carefully guard our heart and choose our words, when we realize the power that integrity of heart wields and the far-reaching influence of our words.

219

**Resisting the Truth from God**

Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool. Also it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge. And he sins who hastens with his feet. The foolishness of a man twists his way. And his heart frets against the LORD. (19:1-3)

A wicked man hardens his face. But as for the upright, he establishes his way. (21:29)

There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, Yet is not washed from its filthiness. (30:12)

- When confronted with truth, must choose to repent or twist the truth, lie to themselves. *Self-delusion, self-justification* is a *fundamental* danger!
- *God helps* those who do *not love* truth to *find lies* they seek (2 The. 2:9-12).

222

**Self-Delusion's Final Form**

8. How does a lack of integrity isolate a man, and what tools will he use to accomplish his goal (18:1)?

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. (18:1)

- Because he cannot tolerate anything that challenges or condemns his self-delusion, and because self-deceit only grows until it reaches whopper proportions, a man must ultimately isolate himself, except from the few who are accomplices in his deceit.
- Those who threaten his mirage will find only his rage, because he is so hardened.
- Represents final stage of self-delusion, awaiting only destruction.

225

**Dishonest Negotiations**

9. How does dishonesty help the buyer in the marketplace (20:14)? Does that benefit justify the practice or help him ultimately? What lesson should we learn from this?

*"It is good for nothing," cries the buyer; But when he has gone his way, then he boasts. (20:14)*

- Falsely devalues something to get a "steal".
- Boasting proves deliberate deceit – not accidental.
- All lying eventually catches a person, as already shown.
- Few dollars saved is a rip-off compared to damage to conscience. The only one getting a bargain is the Devil. ☹️

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**GOSSIP, TEMPER, CONFLICT AND DIVISION**

Verses: 10:10-14, 18-21, 31-32; 11:9, 11-13; 13:2-3, 17; 14:17, 29; 15:1-2, 4, 18, 28; 16:27-30, 32; 17:1, 4, 9, 11, 14, 27-28; 18:6-8, 19-21, 23; 19:11, 19; 20:3, 19; 21:23-24, 28; 22:8, 10, 24-25; 24:26; 25:8-12, 15, 23, 28; 26:2, 20-28; 27:4; 29:5, 8, 9, 11, 28, 32; 30:32-33

229

**The End of Gossip**

1. What is the fruit of gossip, slander, tale-bearing and cursing (10:10, 12-14, 31-32; 13:2; 18:6-7; 22:8; 26:2, 20-21, 26-27)?

*The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, But the perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, But the mouth of the wicked what is perverse. (10:31-32)*

*A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth, But the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence. (13:2)*

*A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul. (18:6-7)*

*He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, And the rod of his anger will fail. (22:8)*

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**Admitting, Accepting Wrong**

10. If we are mistreated, why can we not lie for vengeance (24:28-29; 30:10)? Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause. For would you deceive with your lips? Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work." (24:28-29)

- Even if mistreated, give place to wrath. Do not lie to justify vengeance. It is God's place (Romans 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
- Do not malign a servant to his master. Lest he curse you, and you be found guilty. (30:10)
- Occasionally, we must confront error and wrong, even going up chain of command.
- However, do not abuse authority – especially for revenge – when no real wrong has been committed ("you be found guilty").

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**The End of Gossip**

1. What is the fruit of gossip, slander, tale-bearing and cursing (10:10, 12-14, 31-32; 13:2; 18:6-7; 22:8; 26:2, 20-21, 26-27)?

- Strife and division follow gossip ...

*Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.... Though his hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him. (26:20-21, 26-27)*

- Sooner or later, the gossip, divisive person is exposed and punished.
- The contention he started comes to an end – without him and his friends.

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**Eating the Fruit of the Tongue**

2. By contrast, what blessings are derived from the words of the wise (10:11, 13, 20-21; 11:11; 15:4; 18:20-21)?

*A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth, From the produce of his lips he shall be filled. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit. (18:20-21)*

- What we say is extremely powerful (James 3:1-8)!
- Regardless of motive, we will absolutely bear the consequences of using it.
- Better to appreciate it, "love it", and cultivate mastery of it to benefit!

*The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked. (10:11)*

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**The Joking Madman**

11. Besides all the consequences associated with lying, what else can one expect when they mistreat someone else and then say, "I was only joking" (26:18-19)?

*Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, Is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, "I was only joking!" (26:18-19)*

- Too often, "I was only joking", is used to cover up what is not a joke!
- Often this is used to back down a statement producing unexpected reaction.
- The pain caused by the deceit or insult is real, and so the wrath will be real.

228

**The End of Gossip**

1. What is the fruit of gossip, slander, tale-bearing and cursing (10:10, 12-14, 31-32; 13:2; 18:6-7; 22:8; 26:2, 20-21, 26-27)?

- Words without justification are eventually exposed – only temporarily applied ("What is the chaff to the wheat?", Jer. 23:28).

*Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse without cause shall not alight. (26:2)*

- Eventually the gossip, divisive person will be ruined and destroyed.

*He who winks with the eye causes trouble, But a prating fool will fall. ... Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, But a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding. Wise people store up knowledge, But the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. (10:10, 13-14)*

231

**Eating the Fruit of the Tongue**

2. By contrast, what blessings are derived from the words of the wise (10:11, 13, 20-21; 11:11; 15:4; 18:20-21)?

*Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, But a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding. (10:13)*

*The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom. (10:20-21)*

*By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. (11:11)*

*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, But perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (15:4)*

- If developed, we can help ourselves, others, even the whole city!

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**Tools of Division**

3. What "tools" does a fool use to cause strife and division (10:10-14, 18-21; 11:9; 16:28-30; 20:19; 22:10; 29:5, 8-9)?

*Whoever hides hatred has lying lips. And whoever spreads slander is a fool. In the multitude of words sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom. (10:18-21)*

- They use lying, slander, and speak pure foolishness – in a "multitude of words".

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**Tools of Division**

3. What "tools" does a fool use to cause strife and division (10:10-14, 18-21; 11:9; 16:28-30; 20:19; 22:10; 29:5, 8-9)?

*He who winks with the eye causes trouble. But a prating fool will fall. (10:10) A perverse man sows strife. And a whisperer separates the best of friends. A violent man entices his neighbor, And leads him in a way that is not good. He winks his eye to devise perverse things; He purses his lips and brings about evil. (16:28-30)*

- Even subtle facial expressions and gestures can be used to communicate scoffing, generate division. Be careful! Be aware!
- Trust your parents and teachers who through experience see what you yet cannot.

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**Motivation of the Divisive**

4. What motivates a divisive person (10:12; 11:12; 17:11, 19; 21:24; 26:23-25, 28)? How compulsive is their manifested motivation (16:27; 17:4)?

*An evil man seeks only rebellion. Therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him. (17:11)*

- Rejection of authority and godly influential leaders represents rebellion. A proud and haughty man – "Scoffer" is his name; He acts with arrogant pride. (21:24)
- He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor. But a man of understanding holds his peace. (11:12)
- Those who rebel and divide often believe they are superior, looking down on other people, especially those in positions of leadership and influence.

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**Tools of Division**

3. What "tools" does a fool use to cause strife and division (10:10-14, 18-21; 11:9; 16:28-30; 20:19; 22:10; 29:5, 8-9)?

*The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor, But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered. (11:9)*

- Hypocrisy – Exhibits one standard for himself and one for everyone else. A man who flatters his neighbor Spreads a net for his feet. (29:5)
- He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips. (20:19)
- Flattery is used to butter you up, open you up, and pry you for secrets.

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**Motivation of the Divisive**

4. What motivates a divisive person (10:12; 11:12; 17:11, 19; 21:24; 26:23-25, 28)? How compulsive is their manifested motivation (16:27; 17:4)?

*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins. (10:12)*

*Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, And whoever spreads slander is a fool. In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; The heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom. (10:18-21)*

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**Motivation of the Divisive**

4. What motivates a divisive person (10:12; 11:12; 17:11, 19; 21:24; 26:23-25, 28)? How compulsive is their manifested motivation (16:27; 17:4)?

*He who loves transgression loves strife, And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction. (17:19)*

- Those determined to sin inevitably bring division (2 Sam. 15:1-6). Such stubbornness represents self-exaltation, pride, arrogance.
- An ungodly man digs up evil, And it is on his lips like a burning fire. (16:27)
- An evildoer gives heed to false lips; A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue. (17:4)
- Their deep desire to destroy the current leadership and people of influence, direction compels them to both speak and listen uncontrollably.

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**Tools of Division**

3. What "tools" does a fool use to cause strife and division (10:10-14, 18-21; 11:9; 16:28-30; 20:19; 22:10; 29:5, 8-9)?

*Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; Yes, strife and reproach will cease. (22:10)*

*Scoffers set a city afire, But wise men turn away wrath. If a wise man contends with a foolish man, Whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace. (29:8-9)*

- Scoffing, derision, making fun of something can create a "mob mentality" drawing you into rejecting wisdom, if not just feeling embarrassed to stand.
- Easy to complain. How about a solution?
- Scoffers' lack of shame enables them to manipulate through your shyness.

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**Motivation of the Divisive**

4. What motivates a divisive person (10:12; 11:12; 17:11, 19; 21:24; 26:23-25, 28)? How compulsive is their manifested motivation (16:27; 17:4)?

*Fervent lips with a wicked heart Are like earthenware covered with silver dross. He who hates, disguises it with his lips. And lays up deceit within himself; When he speaks kindly, do not believe him. For there are seven abominations in his heart; Though his hatred is covered by deceit, His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him. A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin. (26:23-28)*

- Hatred and jealousy are primary motivations of gossips, divisive people.

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**Aiding and Abetting**

5. How is the gossip and talebearer encouraged and enabled (18:8; 21:28; 26:22)?

*The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, And they go down into the inmost body. (18:8; 26:22)*

- People generally like to hear gossip so they:
  - Can "be in the know", part of an exclusive inner circle.
  - Feel better about themselves by putting others down.
- A false witness shall perish. But the man who hears him will speak endlessly. (21:28)
- Once gossip starts, it is impossible to stop its spread – like wildfire.
- Those who spread it may not know – or question – its truthfulness.

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**How to Not Gossip**

6. What qualities help a person to not gossip (11:13; 13:3; 17:9)? Therefore, when we do gossip, what qualities are we lacking?  
*He who guards his mouth preserves his life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction. (13:3)*

- Carefulness, thoughtfulness, self-control are critical for us and others. *A talebearer reveals secrets. But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter. (11:13)*
- Loyalty, faithfulness to those vulnerable is required to protect others. *He who covers a transgression seeks love. But he who repeats a matter separates friends. (17:9)*
- Ultimately, love compels us not to tell what would injure others.
- Also, be slow to hear, accept the worst: 18:13, 17.

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**Motivation for a “Soft Answer”**

7. Why is it wise to be “slow to wrath” versus being the “quick-tempered man” (14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:14; 18:19; 25:8-10, 23, 28; 29:22; 30:33)?  
*The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts. (17:14)*  
*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city. And contentions are like the bars of a castle. (18:19)*

- Furthermore, there is no “unsaying” explosive words or “undoing” such conflict once begun. Therefore, stop it before it begins. Be careful in words.

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**The Soft Answer**

8. How should this affect our words and responses (15:1-2, 28; 17:27; 18:23; 19:11; 20:3; 21:23; 24:26; 25:11-12, 15; 27:4; 29:11, 20; 30:32)?  
*A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. (15:1-2)*  
*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil. (15:28)*  
*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles. (21:23)*  
*Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (29:20)*

- Key lesson is to be very careful in what you say. Better to think and choose few words slowly, carefully than many words in haste, anger, foolishness.

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**Motivation for a “Soft Answer”**

7. Why is it wise to be “slow to wrath” versus being the “quick-tempered man” (14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:14; 18:19; 25:8-10, 23, 28; 29:22; 30:33)?  
*A quick-tempered man acts foolishly. And a man of wicked intentions is hated. (14:17)*  
*He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly. (14:29)*

- A fiery temper is clearly condemned, and patience is exalted, but why?

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**Motivation for a “Soft Answer”**

7. Why is it wise to be “slow to wrath” versus being the “quick-tempered man” (14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:14; 18:19; 25:8-10, 23, 28; 29:22; 30:33)?  
*Do not go hastily to court; For what will you do in the end, When your neighbor has put you to shame? Debate your case with your neighbor, And do not disclose the secret to another; Lest he who hears it expose your shame. And your reputation be ruined. (25:8-10)*

- Similarly, it is difficult – almost impossible – to deescalate an already escalated situation (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).
- Keep matters private until there is no choice – for everyone’s benefit – yours and theirs (Matthew 18:15-17).
- A “soft answer” involves not only tone & words but location & audience.

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**The Soft Answer**

8. How should this affect our words and responses (15:1-2, 28; 17:27; 18:23; 19:11; 20:3; 21:23; 24:26; 25:11-12, 15; 27:4; 29:11, 20; 30:32)?  
*He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. (17:27)*  
*A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back. (29:11)*  
*If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, Or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth. (30:32)*

- Saying as little as possible – sometimes nothing – is the best answer. *By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone. (25:15)*
- The poor man uses entreaties, But the rich answers roughly. (18:23)
- Patience, gentleness, asking are best ways to approach (1 Timothy 5:1).

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**Motivation for a “Soft Answer”**

7. Why is it wise to be “slow to wrath” versus being the “quick-tempered man” (14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:14; 18:19; 25:8-10, 23, 28; 29:22; 30:33)?  
*The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance. (25:23)*  
*For as the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife. (30:33)*  
*A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention. (15:18)*  
*An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. (29:22)*

- Consequences of anger and explosive temper are strife, division, and sin.

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**Motivation for a “Soft Answer”**

7. Why is it wise to be “slow to wrath” versus being the “quick-tempered man” (14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 17:14; 18:19; 25:8-10, 23, 28; 29:22; 30:33)?  
*Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls. (25:28)*  
*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (16:32)*

- Uncontrollable temper leaves us vulnerable, easily manipulated, and very dangerous – for us, those around us, and those for whom we are responsible.
- Self-control, discretion makes us stronger than the greatest soldier or general.

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**The Soft Answer**

8. How should this affect our words and responses (15:1-2, 28; 17:27; 18:23; 19:11; 20:3; 21:23; 24:26; 25:11-12, 15; 27:4; 29:11, 20; 30:32)?  
*The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression. (19:11)*

- Empathy, mercy and reasonableness often call for just ignoring some things. *It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel. (20:3)*
- Providing the “benefit of the doubt” and overlooking some common frailties will help avoid many conflicts by not even “registering” them (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Ecclesiastes 7:22).

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**The Soft Answer**

8. How should this affect our words and responses (15:1-2, 28; 17:27; 18:23; 19:11; 20:3; 21:23; 24:26; 25:11-12, 15; 27:4; 29:11, 20; 30:32)?

*He who gives a right answer kisses the lips. (24:26)*

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. (25:11-12)

- Well worded, timed answers are wonderful things – extremely helpful – worth remembering and emulating.

*Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy? (27:4)*

- Otherwise, you will destroy all who stand before you – and ultimately yourself.

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**GENEROSITY, GRACE  
VERSUS GREED, WRATH**

Wives: 11:16-17, 24-25; 12:10; 13:7; 14:21, 31; 19:17, 22; 21:13, 26; 22:9, 16, 22-23; 25:14, 21-22; 27:20; 28:3, 8, 27; 29:7; 30:14-15

256

**End of Generosity vs. Greed**

3. What is the surprising end of generosity versus greed (11:17, 24-25; 13:7; 14:21; 27:20; 28:8, 27)?

*Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied. (27:20)*

- Greed ultimately fails to satisfy, because it never is satisfied (30:14-15).
- Selfishness deceives and leaves a person empty, hollow – despite its promise.

259

**Relationship with Contentious**

9. Why would it be important to highlight the misery and danger of long-term conflict (17:1; 19:19; 22:24-25)? How do we avoid such imprisonments?

*Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife. (17:1)*

- Joy of greatest riches & pleasures are overwhelmed with misery of strife.

*A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again. (19:19)*

- Wrathful, hasty people rarely learn, so don't start a habit of bailing them out.

*Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go. Lest you learn his ways And set a snare for your soul. (22:24-25)*

- Friends tend to share their bad habits. It's unavoidable (1 Cor. 15:33).
- So, whatever you do, do not befriend or marry any of the above people!

254

**"Each Esteem Others ..."**

1. When people are generous, gracious, and merciful, whose benefit do they seek (21:26; 29:7)? In contrast, whose benefit do the greedy, ruthless, cruel and wrathful seek (30:14-15)?

*The righteous considers the cause of the poor. But the wicked does not understand such knowledge. (29:7)*

*He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare. (21:26)*

*There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, And whose fangs are like knives, To devour the poor from off the earth, And the needy from among men. The leech has two daughters – Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied, Four never say, "Enough!" (30:14:15)*

- Generous consider others over themselves (Phi. 2:3-5). Greedy only self.

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**End of Generosity vs. Greed**

3. What is the surprising end of generosity versus greed (11:17, 24-25; 13:7; 14:21; 27:20; 28:8, 27)?

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself. (11:24-25)*

*There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches. (13:7)*

- Surprisingly, often in this life, wealth eventually comes to the generous.
- Why would God grant riches to those who hoard them? He will take care of those who are generous (2 Corinthians 9:6, 8) – although this should not be viewed as a path or promise to riches.

260

**Brevity & Conciseness**

10. What are the benefits and blessings of brevity (10:19; 17:28)?

*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise. (10:19)*

*Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. (17:28)*

- Beside gossip – awkward silence, low self-esteem (i.e., effort to elevate self, need to be center of attention), desperation for friends, and other immaturities promote unbounded talking.
- Learning to say, reveal, promise, and boast less is invaluable – wise.
- More concise, brief responses are also better understood and received – although you can go too far and become vague, unclear (1 Cor. 14:6-12).

255

**Short-Term Reward of Greed**

2. What is the short-term payoff of greed, ruthlessness, cruelty, and wrath (11:16)?

*A gracious woman retains honor, But ruthless men retain riches. (11:16)*

- In the short-term, greed, selfishness, ruthlessness (i.e., no empathy or pity) does bring additional wealth and satisfaction. ...
- However, can we – will we see the end from the beginning?

258

**End of Generosity vs. Greed**

3. What is the surprising end of generosity versus greed (11:17, 24-25; 13:7; 14:21; 27:20; 28:8, 27)?

*One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion Gathers it for him who will pity the poor. (28:8)*

- Even those who become wealthy, eventually leave it behind for someone else, who will be charitable.

261

**End of Generosity vs. Greed**

3. What is the surprising end of generosity versus greed (11:17, 24-25; 13:7; 14:21; 27:20; 28:8, 27)?

*The merciful man does good for his own soul. But he who is cruel troubles his own flesh.* (11:17)

*He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.* (14:21)

*He who gives to the poor will not lack. But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.* (28:27)

- Although greed brings despise, hatred, and curses in this life, the ultimate failure is loss of one's soul (Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:13-21).
- Greatest, surest blessings of generosity are spiritual (Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6-15).

262

**Heaping Coals of Fire**

5. How does one "heap coals of fire" on the head of his enemy (25:21-22)? If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, And the LORD will reward you. (25:21-22)

- Genuinely rewarding our enemy with good for evil will (Mat. 5:38-48):
  - Eliminate some of his satisfaction for mistreating us.
  - Consequently, possibly discourage or stop him from mistreating us.
  - Maybe even prick his conscience and cause him to repent.
  - Give place to God. Let Him take care of it – better than us (Rom. 12:19-21).
  - Otherwise, God might turn from His plans to avenge us (Pro. 24:17-18).
  - Therefore, we should never "heap coals of fire" in spite or revenge.

265

**Unexpected Cruelty**

8. What is ironic and terrible about the "poor oppressing the poor" (28:3)? A poor man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no food. (28:3)

- For an agriculture-based society, rain is critical for crops, ultimately food.
- People often look longingly for rain, in desperate need.
- Incoming rain clouds produce expectation, encouraging hope for relief.
- But, a hard "driving rain" does more damage to the ground than good, much of the water running off, never watering the ground, disappointing all.
- Similarly, people expect the poor to be merciful to the poor – who could be more sympathetic? When they fail, they likewise disappoint, dashing expectations and doing more harm than good (Ezekiel 18:13-14).

268

**Active, Watchful God**

4. How is both our generosity and cruelty to the poor related to God (14:31; 19:17, 22; 21:13; 22:9, 22-23)?

*He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker. But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.* (14:31)

- Our charity and help for the needy necessarily reflects our recognition as a fellow creature and our respect for God and His work as Creator.

*He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.* (19:17)

*What is desired in a man is kindness. And a poor man is better than a liar.* (19:22)

- God sees, will ultimately repay our kindness to the needy (Mat. 25:31-46).

263

**Mercies of the Wicked**

6. How is the "mercy" of the righteous contrasted with that of the wicked (12:10)?

*A righteous man regards the life of his animal. But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* (12:10)

- Dramatically contrasts the mercy of the righteous versus the wicked:
  - Righteous are so merciful, they are even concerned about their animals.
  - Wicked are regarded as cruel even in their tenderest moments. Makes you wonder how their deliberate cruelty would be regarded.

266

**Empty Promises**

*Whoever falsely boasts of giving is like clouds and wind without rain.* (25:14)

9. Why would someone boast of giving, and why would false boasters be like "clouds and wind without rain" (25:14)?

- Like the previous picture, clouds and wind produce the expectation of rain.
- Those who talk of how much they give or are willing to give, *similarly disappoint* when their boasting and promises fail to materialize.
- Why would someone boast? Remember Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

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**Active, Watchful God**

4. How is both our generosity and cruelty to the poor related to God (14:31; 19:17, 22; 21:13; 22:9, 22-23)?

*Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.* (21:13)

- Contrariwise, ignoring the pleas of the poor will cause God to ignore our prayers for help (James 2:13; Matthew 18:23-35; 7:1-2).

*Do not rob the poor because he is poor. Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the LORD will plead their cause, And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.* (22:22-23)

- Even worse, if we take advantage of the poor and helpless because they have no defense, then God will take what little we have – spiritually, our soul!

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**Misplaced Charity**

7. Why would someone give to the rich, and why would that motivation be misguided (22:16)?

*He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.* (22:16)

- Just as those who oppress the poor will fail, so will those who give to rich.
- Why?
  - Hoping to win friendship or favor of the rich through gifts fails because:
    - They are expensive. They are already wealthy. What will you give to impress?
    - Like preceding pictures of the wealthy, they may be greedy and reluctant to repay.
  - Deliberate bribing to pervert justice provokes God's attention and judgment ...

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**INDUSTRIOUSNESS AND FINANCES**

Verses: 10:4-5, 15-16, 26; 11:15, 28; 12:9, 11, 24, 27; 13:4-8, 11; 14:4, 23; 15:19, 27; 16:26; 17:2, 18; 18:9, 19, 15, 24; 20:4, 13, 16-17; 21:5, 17, 20, 25; 22:2, 7, 13, 26-27, 29; 23:1-8; 24:27, 30-34; 26:13-16; 27:13, 18, 23-27; 28:11, 19-20, 22; 29:21; 30:24-28

270

**Positive Value of Wealth**

1. Although vastly inferior to wisdom, humility, love, and other virtues, how does wealth help a person (10:15; 12:9; 13:8; 22:7)?  
*The rich man's wealth is his strong city: The destruction of the poor is their poverty. (10:15)*  
*The ransom of a man's life is his riches, But the poor does not hear rebuke. (13:8)*

- Wealth provides a shield, defense from many of *this* life's thorny problems – even kidnapping, whereas the poor have no such defense.

*The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender. (22:7)*

- Any poverty – especially self-induced through too much debt and loans – makes us a slave to our creditors, lenders, surrendering our free-will to them.

271

**Danger of Wealth**

2. What danger is associated with wealth (11:28; 13:11; 15:27; 20:17; 22:2; 23:4-5; 28:11, 20, 22)? How does a personal fall into this trap?  
*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. (1 Timothy 6:3-11)*

- Wealth must never be obtained at the expense of spiritual, family harm.

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**Danger of Wealth**

2. What danger is associated with wealth (11:28; 13:11; 15:27; 20:17; 22:2; 23:4-5; 28:11, 20, 22)? How does a personal fall into this trap?  
*The rich man is wise in his own eyes, But the poor who has understanding searches him out. (28:11)*  
*The rich and the poor have this in common, The LORD is the maker of them all. (22:2)*

- Trusting in riches may manifest as *forgetting* poor, thinking you're superior to others, making you *arrogant* and resistant to correction – *unteachable*. *Do not overwork to be rich*; Because of your own understanding, *cease!* Will you set your eyes on that which is *not*? For riches certainly *make themselves wings*: *They fly away like an eagle toward heaven*. (23:4-5)
- Finally, riches are fleeting, unsatisfying. You can easily lose it all.

277

**Positive Value of Wealth**

1. Although vastly inferior to wisdom, humility, love, and other virtues, how does wealth help a person (10:15; 12:9; 13:8; 22:7)?  
*Better is the one who is slighted but has a servant. Than he who honors himself but lacks bread. (12:9)*

- Not only shows the *emptiness of self-exaltation*, it also demonstrates the surpassing value of wealth over insults, easier to swallow when wealthy. ☺
- For all of its value as a shield and defense, must remember greater value: *For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. (Ecclesiastes 7:12)*
- Value and pursuit of wealth must be properly balanced. Can go too far ...

272

**Danger of Wealth**

2. What danger is associated with wealth (11:28; 13:11; 15:27; 20:17; 22:2; 23:4-5; 28:11, 20, 22)? How does a personal fall into this trap?  
*Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, But he who gathers by labor will increase. (13:11)*  
*He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, But he who hates bribes will live. (15:27)*  
*Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. (20:17)*

- Wealth procured *sinfully* (e.g., lying, cheating, bribery) brings physical and spiritual consequences, plus it fails to satisfy as promised – we are deceived!
- However, honest hard work will bring increase, and that's good. ☺

275

**Danger of Cosigning, Surety**

3. What danger is associated with being "surety", for example, cosigning a loan (11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13)?  
*He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, But one who hates being surety is secure. (11:15)*  
*A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, And becomes surety for his friend. (17:18)*

- Whether for stranger or friend, cosigning, backing a loan leads to suffering. *Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge. One of those who is surety for debts; If you have nothing with which to pay, Why should he take away your bed from under you? (22:26-27)*
- Only *give or cosign* loans you can *afford to lose* to avoid suffering.

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**Danger of Wealth**

2. What danger is associated with wealth (11:28; 13:11; 15:27; 20:17; 22:2; 23:4-5; 28:11, 20, 22)? How does a personal fall into this trap?  
*A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished. (28:20)*  
*A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, And does not consider that poverty will come upon him. (28:22)*

- Chasing after riches often result in compromises – even sin – and will produce all kinds of sorrows, including the thing feared, hated – poverty.

273

**Danger of Wealth**

2. What danger is associated with wealth (11:28; 13:11; 15:27; 20:17; 22:2; 23:4-5; 28:11, 20, 22)? How does a personal fall into this trap?  
*He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage. (11:28)*  
*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)*

- Nothing wrong with being rich or enjoying it (Ecc. 2:24; 3:13; 5:18).
- However, must not put trust in it over God, and must be generous in intent and practice. ... It is a balance that requires constant attention.

276

**Danger of Cosigning, Surety**

3. What danger is associated with being "surety", for example, cosigning a loan (11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13)?  
*Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger, And hold it in pledge when he is surety for a seductress. (20:16; 27:13)*

- It can be helpful to *take, lock up* valuables that someone would use for surety, *just so they have clothes and a bed*, for example, children or those irresponsible.

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**Wise Labor**

4. When do the wise work (10:5)? How do they work (14:4; 21:5; 24:27; 27:18, 23-27)?  
*He who gathers in summer is a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame. (10:5)*

- Work when needed, not when it is easy or comfortable.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. (21:5)*  
*Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house. (24:27)*

- Using wisdom, look ahead, make plans, and work first the things with the longest lead time and greatest need.
- Example: Crops take time to grow. House is luxury.

280

**Primary Motivation to Work**

5. What motivates a man to work (16:26; see also, 21:5-6)?  
*The person who labors, labors for himself. For his hungry mouth drives him on. (16:26)*

- Hunger is an amazing motivator.
- People are only lazy because they are allowed, *enabled* to be.

*For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10)*

- Christians must *not* encourage or *enable* laziness in any way.

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty. Getting treasures by a lying tongue Is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death. (21:5-6)*

- Alternative shortcuts and get-rich-quick schemes inevitably fail.

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**Terrible End of Laziness**

7. What is the inevitable end of laziness, slackness, frivolity and procrastination (10:4; 12:24; 18:9; 19:15; 21:25; 24:30-34; see also, 6:9-11)?

*He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich. (10:4)*

*He who is slothful in his work Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer. (18:9)*

*The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor. (21:25)*

- Laziness, slothfulness, slackness destroys. Diligence is the key to success.

286

**Wise Labor**

4. When do the wise work (10:5)? How do they work (14:4; 21:5; 24:27; 27:18, 23-27)?  
*Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, And attend to your herds; For riches are not forever. Nor does a crown endure to all generations. When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, The lambs will provide your clothing, And the goats the price of a field; You shall have enough goats' milk for your food, For the food of your household, And the nourishment of your maidservants. (27:23-27)*

- Cannot delegate everything. Stay on top of things. If you do, it will sustain you and your household; otherwise, it will slip away.
- Are you "setting up the dominoes", consider how one thing sets up another?

281

**Primary Motivation to Work**

5. What motivates a man to work (16:26; see also, 21:5-6)?  
*Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. (Ephesians 4:28)*

- Work is necessary, so we can not only provide for ourselves and our families (1 Timothy 5:8) – but also for others. Love and generosity should motivate us too.

284

**Terrible End of Laziness**

7. What is the inevitable end of laziness, slackness, frivolity and procrastination (10:4; 12:24; 18:9; 19:15; 21:25; 24:30-34; see also, 6:9-11)?

- How does laziness destroy a person?

*Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread. (20:13)*

*Laziness casts one into a deep sleep. And an idle person will suffer hunger. (19:15)*

*I went by the field of the lazy man, And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; Its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest; So shall your poverty come like a prowler, And your need like an armed man. (24:30-34)*

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**Wise Labor**

4. When do the wise work (10:5)? How do they work (14:4; 21:5; 24:27; 27:18, 23-27)?  
*Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox. (14:4)*

- Wise use tools to accelerate their work and not afraid to clean up the mess.

*Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit; So he who waits on his master will be honored. (27:18)*

- The wise take care of the *things* and the *people* that take care of them.

282

**Natural Industriousness**

6. What lessons can be learned about industriousness from the animal kingdom (30:24-28; see also, 6:6-8)?

*There are four things which are little on the earth, But they are exceedingly wise: The ants are a people not strong, Yet they prepare their food in the summer; The rock badgers are a feeble folk, Yet they make their homes in the crags; The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks; The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, And it is in kings' palaces. (30:24-28)*

*Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer. And gathers her food in the harvest. (6:6-8)*

- Initiative, determination, and incremental advancement, distributed collective progress are demonstrated all around us. Are they smarter than us?

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**Terrible End of Laziness**

7. What is the inevitable end of laziness, slackness, frivolity and procrastination (10:4; 12:24; 18:9; 19:15; 21:25; 24:30-34; see also, 6:9-11)?

*How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep – So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man. (6:9-11)*

- *Procrastination* puts off work – just for a little while. *Wake up!!!*
- Recognize power of one more (“a little sleep”) and its size (“a little sleep”).
- It's *never* just one, and they *accumulate* over time into a *monster*.
- One more level? One more episode? One more text? One more ...
- What do you have to show for the past month? ... Whose life are you living?
- You want independence, significance? Free yourself from habits and thinking that enslaves you! Be an adult by *choosing diligence!*

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**Despicable Laziness**

8. How are the lazy described (10:26; 12:27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 22:13; 26:13-16)? What are their characteristics, and why is this important?

*The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. (13:4)*

*The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing. (20:4)*

- Why does the lazy have nothing? He hates work and has no diligence.
- Such laziness is arrogant, disgusting, loathsome – no wonder no one will help such a one (“*commanded ... neither shall he eat*”, 2 Thessalonians 3:10; “*no one gave him anything*”, Luke 15:13-16).

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**Despicable Laziness**

8. How are the lazy described (10:26; 12:27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 22:13; 26:13-16)? What are their characteristics, and why is this important?

*As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy man to those who send him. (10:26)*

- Boys and girls, whatever you do, *never ever date – much less marry* – a lazy person. They will *torture* you for the rest of your life!
- You will be required to do all of *their work* plus your own, while living in sorrow and misery – not to mention producing more children like them. ☹
- Do not permanently attach yourself to someone so arrogant, despicable, disgusting.

292

**Gifts of Jealous Debt**

11. Why is it dangerous to enjoy the food and gifts given to you by a ruler or miser (23:1-3, 6-8)?

*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 deceptive food. ... Do not eat the bread of a miser, Nor desire his delicacies; 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 you have eaten, you will vomit up, And waste your pleasant words. (23:1-3, 6-8)*

- Rulers acquire power and misers acquire wealth through fierce ambition.
- Gifts they offer often have “strings” attached.
- Failure to repay what you owe will reveal true willingness to be generous. ☹

295

**Despicable Laziness**

8. How are the lazy described (10:26; 12:27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 22:13; 26:13-16)? What are their characteristics, and why is this important?

*The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, But diligence is man’s precious possession. (12:27)*

*A lazy man buries his hand in the bowl, And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again. (19:24)*

- Despicable picture of man with food in hand – but too lazy to raise his hand!
- *In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.* (14:23)
- The lazy waste time talking – even talking about all the work they will do – big plans – but only real, actual work generates value.

290

**Not Lazy – Just Want Pleasure?**

9. How are pleasure seekers different than the lazy man, the procrastinator – and yet very similar (12:11; 21:17, 20; 28:19)?

*He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough! (28:19; also, 12:11)*

*He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich. (21:17)*

*There is desirable treasure, And oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man squanders it. (21:20)*

- Laziness may be a desire to avoid difficult work, but *pleasure seekers* fail *similarly* because they are so desperate, chasing what is *not* work.

293

**ALCOHOL**

verses: 20:1; 23:20-21; 29:35; 31:4-7

296

**Despicable Laziness**

8. How are the lazy described (10:26; 12:27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 22:13; 26:13-16)? What are their characteristics, and why is this important?

*The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright is a highway. (15:19)*

*The lazy man says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!” (22:13)*

*The lazy man says, “There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!” As a door turns on its hinges, So does the lazy man on his bed. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes Than seven men who can answer sensibly. (26:13-16)*

- Lazy people *always* have excuses – which can never be answered to their satisfaction – which makes everything difficult, when it could be easy. They’re *unteachable!*
- Their imagination and dread makes life harder than it has to be. Just do it! ☹

291

**Spoiled Children and Servants**

10. How might the surprising events of 17:2 occur today? In contrast, how might 29:21 happen today?

*A wise servant will rule over a son who causes shame, And will share an inheritance among the brothers. (17:2)*

- Hard working servants to a family may be honored – even blessed with an inheritance – *over* children of man who himself prizes industriousness.
- Many industrious people have spoiled children and surprisingly give their inheritance to those who will value it and use it well.

*He who pampers his servant from childhood Will have him as a son in the end. (29:21)*

- Servants are expected to work rather than children. A spoiled servant will expect to sponge off an inheritance, as if he were a child. *Don’t spoil either!*

294

**Alcohol's Immediate Effects**

1. What does alcohol do to a person, and consequently, what kind of person would voluntarily participate in such (20:1; 23:29-30, 33-34)?

*Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. (20:1)*

- Alcohol alters personality, causes fights. ... Know this in advance – be wise!
- Who has *woe*? Who has *sorrow*? Who has *contentions*? Who has *complaints*? Who has *wounds without cause*? Who has *redness of eyes*? ... *Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things.* Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying ... (23:29-30, 33-34)
- Alcohol alters your senses, perception, inhibitions – leads to unnecessary misery and suffering. ... Leaves you vulnerable to sins of all, worst kinds.

297

**Seductive Serpent**

2. Beyond its intoxicating effects, what other aspects of wine might allure person (23:31)? How would these qualities deceive and entrap them (23:32)?

*Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. (23:31-32)*

- People often turn to alcohol to escape their problems, have a good time.
- Over time, they associate the color, the aroma, the effervescence, the texture with all they hope, want it to provide – escape, peace, fun, luxury, prestige.
- Appearances are deceiving – it seems harmless – even delightful – but it is more poisonous than the most venomous rattlesnake or cobra.

298

**Alcohol's Effects on Others**

5. How can drinking alcohol hurt someone else (31:4-5)?

*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted. (31:4-5)*

- Because alcohol perverts our judgment, memory, and priorities, we can easily hurt others, influence others to sin, badly abuse others.
- Many families have suffered silently under the brutal battering accomplished by a drunken father and husband, beating wife and children unknown to others.
- Not to mention, the misery suffered by others living in fear, dread, need – while their parents – or children – abandon, abuse their responsibility.

301

**Social Drinking?**

7. Based on these verses and possibly others, would limited amounts of consuming alcohol be permissible for social or recreational purposes? Why or why not?

*For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. (1 Peter 4:3-4)*

- Eliminates drinking in moderation and excess – private or social.
- Ultimately, drinking “dissipates” a person’s life, wasting it and talents away.
- We are servants, priests, and royalty who must reflect Christ – not alcohol (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:8-14, 19-20; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:4-12)!

304

**Numbing Addiction**

3. What problem with alcohol is portrayed in 23:35? Why does this make alcohol so dangerous?

*“They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” (23:35)*

- Alcohol deadens, numbs pain – making it impossible to determine how badly you are hurting yourself – until the next morning.
- Furthermore, it is addictive – physically and psychologically:
  - Physically – Body builds a dependence upon alcohol, an addiction.
  - Psychologically – Spirit needs alcohol to avoid problems, to cope – problems don’t get easier when you avoid them – they get worse. If you wanted it previously, you’ll want it even more as your problems get worse.

299

**Medicinal Narcotics**

6. If there is a place for alcohol, where is it (31:6-7)? What New Testament verse also suggests such limited usefulness?

*Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more. (31:6-7)*

- Alcohol and similar narcotics can be a merciful euthanizing agent, given to those who are in their last moments of painful, emotional death.
- Can also be used to help medical conditions – surgery, anesthesia, etc.
- No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities. (1 Timothy 5:23)
- Can be medicinal, but better alternatives now without dangers of alcohol.
- Mixed, watered down NT wines much weaker than modern wine.

302

**Social Drinking?**

7. Based on these verses and possibly others, would limited amounts of consuming alcohol be permissible for social or recreational purposes? Why or why not?

- New Testament wine was much weaker than modern alcohol.
- True, Jesus turned “water into wine” (John 2:1-10), however:
  - Greek word for wine can refer to fresh grape juice or alcohol – examine context!
  - Occurred after party drank all the “wine” (2:3). Did Jesus enable drunkenness?
  - Created enough to fill “six waterpots ... containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece ... filled to the brim” (2:6-7). So much wine! Did Jesus enable drunkenness?
  - Master of the feast could still distinguish Jesus’ wine was best, even though served last (2:10). Was he drunk?
  - Did Jesus act contrary to Proverbs and all godly wisdom against alcohol?
  - Every clue in context points to fresh wine – not intoxicating, alcoholic wine.

305

**Alcohol's Effects over Lifetime**

4. How else are drinkers of wine and drunkards affected by their habits beyond intoxication itself (23:20-21)?

*Do not mix with winebibbers, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat; For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, And drowsiness will clothe a man with rags. (23:20-21)*

- Both gluttony and drinking are extreme forms of laziness and pleasure seeking, as studied in last section.
- Drinking is an extreme form of escapism, avoiding problems and work.
- Creates extreme “drowsiness”, worst way to be “cast into a deep sleep”.
- Ultimately, it leads to personal poverty and ruin.
- Example: Drunkards can’t keep jobs or support themselves → live on streets.

300

**Social Drinking?**

7. Based on these verses and possibly others, would limited amounts of consuming alcohol be permissible for social or recreational purposes? Why or why not?

- No! Proverbs has taught us, alcohol is filled with danger: intoxication, addiction, poverty, brawling, loss of influence, abuse, sin, death ...
- Inconsistency? Compare spiritual danger of overeating to alcohol, drinking.
- Nothing positive is ever provided to authorize it. ... Consider Jesus ...
- Inhibits very thing required to determine when too much – your judgment!
- Why commanded to not even “look on the wine” if social drinking is acceptable (23:31)?
- Why was Timothy commanded to take, if so frequent (1 Tim. 5:23)?

303

**Social Drinking?**

7. Based on these verses and possibly others, would limited amounts of consuming alcohol be permissible for social or recreational purposes? Why or why not?

- Noah? Led to being passed out (“drunkenness”), terrible sin and condemnation (Gen. 9:20-25) – not exactly poster child for moderate drinking or innocence of drinking in the privacy of your own home.
- Just for reference, in the Old Testament:
  - Wine was offered as part of fresh “firstfruit” offering (Leviticus 23:10-14).
  - Priests consumed this “wine”, yet were forbidden from alcohol (Deu. 12:17-18; Lev. 10:9).

306

**ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, AND MIRTH**

Verses: 12:25; 13:12, 19; 14:10, 13, 30; 15:13, 15, 23, 30; 17:22; 18:14; 25:20, 25; 27:7

307

**Hope's Weakness & Power**

2. How does hope and desire relate to our heart and state of mind (13:12, 19; 14:30)? Because of this fact, upon what should we set our hopes, and how do we cope with long-term goals in which we hope?

*A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul. But it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.* (13:19)

- A hope satisfied, a goal accomplished brings great joy, cheers us.

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick. But when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.* (13:12)

- Discouragement naturally arises when hope is a long way off, like heaven.
- How do we deal with hope that is realized only after death?

310

**Cause & Cure of Depression**

3. What is the cause and remedy for depression (12:25; 15:23, 30; 25:25)? *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression. But a good word makes it glad.* (12:25)

- Worry, concern and anxiety – especially when runaway, unchecked.
- Relief of that worry and anxiety is key to cure.
- Critical to learn:
  - Not worry about unimportant things (1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19; James 4:1-8).
  - Trust in God for important things (Matthew 6:25-34).
  - Trust in God's response to prayer (James 5:13-18; 1 Peter 5:6-7; Phi. 4:6-7).

313

**Power of a Positive Attitude**

1. How does your attitude, state of mind (or "heart") affect the inner and outer man (15:13, 15; 17:22; 18:14; 27:7)?

*A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance. But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.* (15:13)

- Our attitude, disposition, or spirit is reflected in our face, everyone can see.

*A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb. But to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.* (27:7)

*All the days of the afflicted are evil. But he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.* (15:15)

- Our outlook changes how we evaluate everything. Properly determined, we can learn to find joy – the silver lining – even in "bitter" circumstances.

308

**Hope's Weakness & Power**

2. How does hope and desire relate to our heart and state of mind (13:12, 19; 14:30)? Because of this fact, upon what should we set our hopes, and how do we cope with long-term goals in which we hope?

- Long term hope is Biblically sustained through continually repeating: ...
- Bible study and drawing encouragement from it (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- Prayer (Philippians 4:4-8; 1 Peter 5:5-7).
- Worship and staying busy in spiritual work (1 Kings 19).
- Worship and drawing encouragement from fellow saints (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Taking joy in victories along the way (3 John 4; Philippians 4:4).

*A sound heart is life to the body. But envy is rottenness to the bones.* (14:30)

- Conversely, envy is never happy, because always looking for what's next.

311

**"Weep with Those who Weep"**

4. What are the limits of our efforts to comfort or share in another person's struggles and joys (14:10; 25:20)?

*The heart knows its own bitterness. And a stranger does not share its joy.* (14:10)

- Good to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).
- However, cannot know exactly what is in someone's mind unless they tell us (1 Corinthians 2:11) – but even then, expression limited by expresser.
- Only communicating in prayer is expression unlimited (Rom. 8:26-27).

*Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.* (25:20)

- Recognize time needed for weeping (Ec.3:4; Job 6:26). Not all sorrow bad.

314

**Power of a Positive Attitude**

1. How does your attitude, state of mind (or "heart") affect the inner and outer man (15:13, 15; 17:22; 18:14; 27:7)?

*A merry heart does good, like medicine. But a broken spirit dries the bones.* (17:22)

*The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness. But who can bear a broken spirit?* (18:14)

- Positive attitude is no replacement for real medicine.
- However, negative, sour attitudes can make us feel terrible, even sick.
- Optimistic, positive attitudes can help us power through lesser illnesses unphased and help us overcome and endure greater illnesses with grace.
- Positive attitude must be rooted in spiritual reality – hope, joy, faith, love ...

309

**Cause & Cure of Depression**

3. What is the cause and remedy for depression (12:25; 15:23, 30; 25:25)? *Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression. But a good word makes it glad.* (12:25)

- Worry, concern and anxiety – especially when unchecked, running away
- Relief of that worry and anxiety is key to cure.

*The light of the eyes rejoices the heart. And a good report makes the bones healthy.* (15:30)

*As cold water to a weary soul, So is good news from a far country.* (25:25)

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth. And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!* (15:23; also, 1 Peter 3:9-16)

- Learning, hearing – even delivering – good news alleviates that worry.

312

**Deceiving Laughter**

5. How can "sorrow of the heart" be mixed with "laughter", and how can "mirth" end in "grief" (14:12-13)?

*There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may sorrow. And the end of mirth may be grief.* (14:12-13)

- Some paths produce short-term happiness, mirth, laughter, and joy.
- However, the long-term consequences of those paths often result in grief and sorrow.
- Reappropriating verse 13, people may laugh on outside, cry on inside.
- Also, people often feel mixed emotions in complicated situations, begin laughing and end up crying.

315

## HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Verses: 11:22; 12:4; 15:17; 18:22; 19:13-14; 21:9, 19; 22:14; 23:27-28; 25:24; 27:15-16; 30:18-20, 23; 31:3, 10-31

316

### Deceiving Wealth

3. How can love or hatred in a home be a greater issue than putting food on the table (15:17)?

*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is. Than a fatted calf with hatred.* (15:17)

- Earnest concern for each other, putting each other before one's self in words and actions – the essence of love – is more critical to success, peace, stability and joy of a home than all the riches in the world.
- If a man or woman has all the riches in the world, but is hated by their spouse or children, they will suffer one of life's greatest miseries for their lifetime.
- Marry someone who cares more about you than themselves – not for wealth!

319

### Miserable Contentious Wife

5. How can a "contentious woman" be such a miserable wife (or daughter), and how can they be identified before it is too late (19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16; 30:21-23)?

*A continual dripping on a very rainy day And a contentious woman are alike; Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right hand.* (27:15-16)

- Terrible mistake and deceit to believe that you can control her.
- The contentious person cannot be controlled, curbed, or changed.
- However, she can be **created** by ignoring her pleas, depriving of attention.

322

### Blessings of Marriage

1. How was marriage intended to affect a person, and by whom was it so designed (18:22; 19:14; 30:18-19)?

*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD.* (18:22)

*Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD.* (19:14)

- Being married can be good – but a good wife is from God (Gen. 1-2)! *There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the midst of the sea, And the way of a man with a virgin.* (30:18-19)
- As mysterious as a flying eagle, so is a married man. Only God enables it!

317

### Deceiving, Wasted Beauty

4. What is a "lovely woman who lacks discretion" like, and how can this be true (11:22)?

*As a ring of gold in a swine's snout. So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.* (11:22)

- There is nothing appealing or attractive about a pig. Such beautiful decoration and ornamentation is a waste and misplaced.
- Likewise, a woman without judgment, discretion, or wisdom is ultimately unappealing, unattractive, and such outward beauty is wasted on her.
- Applying this requires looking beyond the surface – at her words and behavior – discerning if she is a person of wisdom, judgment, discretion.
- Do not date – and especially **do not marry a pig!**

320

### Miserable Contentious Wife

5. How can a "contentious woman" be such a miserable wife (or daughter), and how can they be identified before it is too late (19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16; 30:21-23)?

*For three things the earth is perturbed. Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For a servant when he reigns, A fool when he is filled with food, A hateful woman when she is married. And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.* (30:21-23)

- If the earth cannot tolerate a "hateful woman" being married at all, will you be able to tolerate being married to her yourself?
- **Identified** by how easily they are upset, frequently require getting their way, blame other people, hurt others, lose their temper, look for trouble, etc.
- It's easy to be happy when everything goes your way, but when it doesn't ...

323

### Power of a Spouse

2. What two extreme effects can a wife have upon a husband (12:4)?

*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband. But she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones.* (12:4)

- A spouse can either **crown** one in glory and honor or **rob** him of all life, vitality, and desire to live – just like a cancer.
- Given such power, how important is it to **carefully** choose a good one?

318

### Miserable Contentious Wife

5. How can a "contentious woman" be such a miserable wife (or daughter), and how can they be identified before it is too late (19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15-16; 30:21-23)?

*A foolish son is the ruin of his father, And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping.* (19:13)

*Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop. Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.* (21:9; 25:24)

*Better to dwell in the wilderness. Than with a contentious and angry woman.* (21:19)

- Continual fighting, nagging and harassment will drive a man to want to live by himself, even in the most miserable of physical conditions to avoid her.
- **Do not marry a contentious person! Do not be a contentious person!**

321

### The Virtuous Wife

6. In contrast, what are the general characteristics of the "virtuous wife" (31:10-31)? How many of her virtues should godly women strive to obtain?

324

**The Virtuous Wife**

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her: So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it. From her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates. (31:10-31)

325

**Conscience of Adulterous Woman**

8. What is the state of the conscience of the "adulterous woman" (30:20)? How do you know?

This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, And says, "I have done no wickedness." (30:20)

- Her conscience is entirely hardened, despite appearance (Mat. 23:1-28).
- She truly believes that she has not done anything wrong (2 Kings 9:33-34):
  - Maybe she thinks God's law has a loophole?
  - Maybe she thinks she is justified because she has been mistreated?
  - Whatever the logic ... she has rationalized away her guilt and conscience.
- This is a truly scary person and should serve as a warning to avoid – and to avoid becoming.

328

**The End of the Disobedient**

1. What has the Lord promised to any who "troubles his own house" (11:29; 20:20-21; 28:24; 30:11, 17)?

There is a generation that curses its father, And does not bless its mother. ... The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it. (30:11, 17)

- Hopeless destruction awaits those who disobey and mistreat their parents.
- Lack of gratitude and a sense of entitlement is also strongly condemned and marked as an early way point on the path to rebellion and destruction.

331

**The Virtuous Wife**

6. In contrast, what are the general characteristics of the "virtuous wife" (31:10-31)? How many of her virtues should godly women strive to obtain?

- Very diligent – not lazy – industrious
- Not afraid, embarrassed of manual labor – physically strong because needed
- Provides for her family – food and clothes
- Perceptive and sells excess for profit
- Trustworthy, Loyal – Seeks well-being of family and husband
- Wise – Both in words and actions
- Kind, Merciful, Compassionate – To family and needy strangers
- Fears the Lord – Fundamental motivation
- Many of these can also be applied to men – compare to Job 31:1-40.

326

**PARENTING AND CHILDREN**

Verses: 10:1, 5; 11:29; 13:24; 15:20; 17:6, 21, 25; 19:18; 26; 20:11, 20-21, 29-30; 22:6, 15, 28; 23:13-16, 19, 22, 24; 26:27; 31; 28:7, 24; 29:3, 15, 17; 30:11, 17; 31:1-2

329

**The Influence of Children**

2. What effects can children have on their parents (10:1, 5; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:26; 23:15-16, 24-25; 27:11; 28:7; 29:3)?

The Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother. (10:1)

A wise son makes a father glad, But a foolish man despises his mother. (15:20)

He who begets a scoffer does so to his sorrow, And the father of a fool has no joy. (17:21)

A foolish son is a grief to his father, And bitterness to her who bore him. (17:25)

My son, if your heart is wise, My heart will rejoice – indeed, I myself; Yes, my inmost being will rejoice. When your lips speak right things. (23:15-16)

332

**Trap of the Immoral Woman**

7. What weapon does the "immoral woman" use to lure her prey, and what kind of man is prone to following after her (22:14)? How is she like a "narrow well" or a "deep pit" (23:27-28; 31:3)?

The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; He who is abhorred by the LORD will fall there. (22:14)

For a harlot is a deep pit, And a seductress is a narrow well. She also lies in wait as for a victim, And increases the unfaithful among men. (23:27-28)

Do not give your strength to women, Nor your ways to that which destroys kings. (31:3)

- She uses her mouth – her words – to seduce people – even kings.
- Very difficult to escape like a narrow, deep trap – will destroy you, men.
- Godly character will enable one to avoid her, preserve marriage.

327

**The End of the Disobedient**

1. What has the Lord promised to any who "troubles his own house" (11:29; 20:20-21; 28:24; 30:11, 17)?

He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool will be servant to the wise of heart. (11:29)

Whoever curses his father or his mother, His lamp will be put out in deep darkness. An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning Will not be blessed at the end. (20:20-21)

- The "prodigal son" began by asking for his inheritance "hastily" (Luke 15:12-17). Where did that take him? ... Starving in the pig pen!

Whoever robs his father or his mother, And says, "It is no transgression," The same is companion to a destroyer. (28:24; also, Matthew 15:3-7)

330

**The Influence of Children**

2. What effects can children have on their parents (10:1, 5; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:26; 23:15-16, 24-25; 27:11; 28:7; 29:3)?

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice. (23:24-25)

Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, But a companion of harlots wastes his wealth. (29:3)

- Parents have no greater joy nor sorrow than what children bring (3 John 4).

For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (3 John 3-4; also, 1 Co.4:15; 1 Tm.1:2; 2 Tm.1:2; 2:1)

333

**The Influence of Children**

2. What effects can children have on their parents (10:1, 5; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:26; 23:15-16, 24-25; 27:11; 28:7; 29:3)?  
*He who gathers in summer is a wise son; He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame.* (10:5)  
*He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.* (19:26)  
*Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son, But a companion of gluttons shames his father.* (28:7)

- Although desire for God’s approval should always far outweigh concern for man’s approval (John 12:42-43), everyone has some dread of shame among community.

334

**Glory of the Old and Young**

3. How can grandchildren and children bring glory to parents and parents to children (17:6; 22:28)? What is the “glory” of the old versus the young, and how do they benefit from each other (20:29; 23:19, 22, 26; 31:1-2)?  
*Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.* (23:22)  
*Hear, my son, and be wise; And guide your heart in the way.* (23:19)  
*My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.* (23:26)  
*The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him: What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows? (31:1-2)*  
*Do not remove the ancient landmark Which your fathers have set.* (22:28)

- Children’s greatest glory comes when listen to their parents, even when old.

337

**Disciplining Children**

4. How is the presence or absence of prompt, physical discipline an indication of a parent’s love or hatred (13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17, 19)?  
*Do not withhold correction from a child. For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.* (23:13-14)  
*He who spares his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.* (13:24)

- Although unpleasant for everyone (Hebrews 12:4-13), prompt and consistent discipline is essential for the child.
- Represents parents’ love – or hatred – even if not immediately obvious.

340

**The Influence of Children**

2. What effects can children have on their parents (10:1, 5; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 19:26; 23:15-16, 24-25; 27:11; 28:7; 29:3)?  
*My son, be wise, and make my heart glad. That I may answer him who reproaches me.* (27:11)

- Both now and eternity, parents must give an account for the actions of their children (Hebrews 13:17).
- Our failure strongly suggests our parents’ failure, although it does not necessitate it. More on this question later ...
- Our failure will prevent our parents from serving in positions of leadership and influence, severely limiting the good they can accomplish in their later years (1 Timothy 3:1, 4-5, 8, 12; Titus 1:5-7).

335

**Glory of the Old and Young**

3. How can grandchildren and children bring glory to parents and parents to children (17:6; 22:28)? What is the “glory” of the old versus the young, and how do they benefit from each other (20:29; 23:19, 22, 26; 31:1-2)?  
*Children’s children are the crown of old men, And the glory of children is their father.* (17:6)

- Do you see your father and grandfather as a glory – or an embarrassment?
- Are you learning, trusting, gaining all that you can from your father?
- If not, what glory can you hope to obtain?
- Mistake to compare fathers against each other as a mistake to compare yourselves to others. Do you want to be compared to everyone else, or against what was given to you, what you could do (2 Cor. 8:12)?

338

**Disciplining Children**

4. How is the presence or absence of prompt, physical discipline an indication of a parent’s love or hatred (13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17, 19)?  
*Chasten your son while there is hope. And do not set your heart on his destruction.* (19:18)

- There is a narrow window of time where a parent can guide and shape a child, helping them to avoid destruction. If missed, effectiveness is little ...
- Failing to seize that opportunity is practically equivalent to deliberately planning, designing your child’s destruction.
- Also, parents may be tempted to give up, lose hope, and assume they will be destroyed. Do not become discouraged. Seize opportunity while you can!

341

**Glory of the Old and Young**

3. How can grandchildren and children bring glory to parents and parents to children (17:6; 22:28)? What is the “glory” of the old versus the young, and how do they benefit from each other (20:29; 23:19, 22, 26; 31:1-2)?  
*The glory of young men is their strength. And the splendor of old men is their gray head.* (20:29)

- Young people have vitality, which the old lack; however, the wise have experience and wisdom that the young lack.
- A greater glory is produced by each learning, helping, using the other.

336

**Disciplining Children**

4. How is the presence or absence of prompt, physical discipline an indication of a parent’s love or hatred (13:24; 19:18; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17, 19)?  
*Blows that hurt cleanse away evil. As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.* (20:30)  
*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.* (22:15)  
*The rod and rebuke give wisdom. But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.* (29:15)

- Corporal punishment – when performed correctly – promotes wisdom & spiritual cleansing, growth. ... If avoided, shame and ruin are sure & certain.

339

**“Even a child is known by ...”**

5. How can a parent know if his child needs discipline, correction or praise, honor (20:11)?  
*Even a child is known by his deeds. Whether what he does is pure and right.* (20:11)

- Everyone – even children – are ultimately recognized and “known” according to what they do. Superficial things (lineage, appearance ...) fade.
- Parents often think they “know” their child, shielding or rewarding them according to what the parent wishes the child’s character to be – not according to what they have.
- Parents must respond to what a child proves themselves to be “by their fruit” (Matthew 7:16; James 3:11-18).

342

**“Train up a child...”**

Train up a child in the way he should go. And when he is old he will not depart from it. (22:6)

6. How does a parent “train up a child in the way that he should go”, so that “when he is old he will not depart from it” (22:6)? Does this mean children do not have free will?

- Like a tree parents cannot make child grow, but they can bend, direct growth.
- Every child is different, and so must be redirected, bent differently – on a case by case basis.
- Generally, the habits we permit and give children, they will carry forever.
- Free will? Proverbs teach **general** rules. Many – not all – have **exceptions**.
- Even apostatized children will carry some habits with them from childhood.

343

**A Man who Desires Friends?**

2. If a person desires friends, then how must he himself behave (18:24, NKJV)? How can a person go too far in this behavior (18:24, NASB)?

*A man who has friends **must himself be friendly**. But there is a friend who **sticks closer than a brother**. (18:24, NKJV)*

- Truly, if someone wants friends, they must be friendly **themselves** – introduce themselves, start conversations – generally **initiate** friendship.
- Represents “**brotherly love**”, an essential component of Christian individuals and a godly, unified church (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 2:17; 3:8; 2 Peter 1:7; 1 John 3:10-17; 4:20-21).

346

**Magnetizing Wealth**

4. How does our wealth affect our friends (19:4, 6-7)?

*Wealth makes many friends. But the poor is separated from his friend. ... Many entreat the favor of the nobility. And every man is a friend to one who gives gifts. All the brothers of the poor hate him; How much more do his friends go far from him! He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him. (19:4, 6-7)*

- Everyone needs help sometimes (27:10). More later ... Be helpful! ☺
- Be careful that you don’t take advantage of your friends, requesting help more often than you need; otherwise, you will lose your friends.
- Be careful trusting in friends who value your wealth, prestige, or gifts.
- Avoid drawing friends through “bribes”. They are not genuine friends.
- “Bribes” can ruin genuine friends, feeding sense of debt, dependence, or lust.

349

**FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS**

Verses: 10:7; 12:26; 17:17; 18:24; 19:4, 6-7; 21:10; 22:1; 25:16-19; 27:9-10, 14, 17, 21

344

**A Man who Desires Friends?**

2. If a person desires friends, then how must he himself behave (18:24, NKJV)? How can a person go too far in this behavior (18:24, NASB)?

*A man of many friends **comes to ruin**. But there is a friend who **sticks closer than a brother**. (18:24, NASB)*

- Equally true, people who have **too many** friends may be destroyed by them – either by being spread too thin, trying to maintain too many relationships, not having enough to maintain them all – or more likely, by being too concerned with the approval and praises of men over God (John 12:42-43).
- Either way, there can be some good friends we choose who are more loyal, helpful than our given brothers and family.
- Appreciate them. Love them. And, thank God for them. ☺

347

**True Friends**

5. How are “fair-weather friends” different than true friends (17:17; 18:24; 25:19; 27:10)?

*A friend loves at all times. And a brother is born for adversity. (17:17)*

- Family is born into a relationship that helps out of duty, obligation – most of the time. ☺
- True friends are helpful **always**, even in the middle of the night (Luke 11:5-8).
- Good friends can prove more helpful, reliable, dependable than family.
- So ...

350

**Powerful Influence of Friends**

1. What is both a great power and danger of friendship of which we should be careful (12:26; 27:9, 17)?

*Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man’s friend gives **delight by hearty counsel**. (27:9)*

*As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. (27:17)*

- Friends can encourage, advise, and help each other tremendously.
- How important is it then to choose friends who encourage, advise **rightly**?
- The righteous should **choose his friends carefully**. For the way of the wicked leads them astray. (12:26)
- Ex: apostasy and destruction (1 Kings 12:6-16; 2 Sam. 13:3; 1 Cor. 15:33).
- Where are your friends leading you? .... Time to get some new friends?

345

**Value of a Good Name**

3. How is “a good name” and “loving favor” preferable to riches, silver, and gold (22:1; 27:21; 10:7)? How might this be overvalued, taken too far?

*A good name is to be **chosen rather than** great riches. Loving favor **rather than silver and gold**. (22:1)*

*The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot. (10:7)*

- A good reputation can be repeatedly “**cash**ed in”, but riches spent only once.
- A good reputation is more enduring than riches, brings more peace, more satisfaction than riches, and is a better indicator of who we really are.
- The **refining pot** is for silver and the **furnace** for gold, And a man is valued by what others say of him. (27:21)
- How we endure the trials of life is recognized by all, establishing value.

348

**True Friends**

5. How are “fair-weather friends” different than true friends (17:17; 18:24; 25:19; 27:10)?

*Confidence in an **unfaithful man in time of trouble** Is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint. (25:19)*

*Do **not forsake** your own friend or your father’s friend, Nor go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity; Better is a **neighbor nearby than a brother far away**. (27:10)*

- Whatever you do, try not to let your friends down in their time of need.
- Do not be a “fair-weather friend”, befriending only when it helps you.
- (Don’t let them use this to tempt you, lead you into wrong, but ...)
- Helping them in their time of need will bring great relief, gratitude, loyalty.
- Wise to foster relationships near for mutual benefit – physically & spiritually.

351

**Role of Wicked & Neighbor**

6. How do the wicked view their neighbors (21:10; 25:18)?  
*The soul of the wicked desires evil; His neighbor finds no favor in his eyes. (21:10)*

- In the mind and schemes of the wicked, people are only tools, useful only as much as they can be used. Mercy, helpfulness mean nothing to such people.
- Beware such people, and beware becoming such people!

*A man who bears false witness against his neighbor Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow. (25:18)*

- Such hateful, manipulative, scheming people are in reality tools themselves, useful only as weapons for pain and judgment. ... Avoid them!

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**“To Everything there is a Season...”**

7. How might friendship and honey be similar (25:16-17; 27:14)?  
*Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need. Lest you be filled with it and vomit. Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house. Lest he become weary of you and hate you. (25:16-17)*  
*He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, It will be counted a curse to him. (27:14)*

- Like honey and ice-cream, too much of friends – even best friends – will make you sick of them.
- Everyone needs some time to do things they want to do.
- People get tired of people who constantly need help (Galatians 6:4-5).
- People get tired of people who are emotionally needy, never time to breathe.
- Pace yourself and your friendship. Give room for other friends too.

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

1. How are we parallel to “kings” and “judges”? How can we apply these instructions to our lives?

- All Christians are considered **priests**:  
*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:4-10)*

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**“Who Is My Neighbor?”**

*And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” So he answered and said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.” And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ...” (Luke 10:25-37)*

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**“Taking a dog by the ears ...”**

*He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own Is like one who takes a dog by the ears. (26:17)*

8. How is meddling in another’s quarrel like “taking a dog by the ears” (26:17)?

- In both cases, it may seem simple enough – at first.
- But, when the one “taken by the ears” starts snarling and going for your throat, you will regret it but be unable to let go.
- You will be stuck, finishing something you should have never started that was not your responsibility.
- Meddling often increases and perpetuates division within a group.

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

1. How are we parallel to “kings” and “judges”? How can we apply these instructions to our lives?

- All Christians are considered **priests** (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10):
  - Offering “sacrifice of praise, fruit of our lips, giving thanks” (Hebrews 13:15).
  - Helping those in need around us (Hebrews 13:16).

*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)*

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**“Who Is My Neighbor?”**

*... Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)*

- Everywhere you can, as much as you can, show mercy to those around you, especially those closest to you (2 Cor. 8:12-14; Gal. 6:1-10).

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**GOVERNMENT: KINGS, JUDGES, AND PEOPLES**

Wives: 13:17,23; 14:28,34-35; 15:22,27; 16:10,12-15; 17:7-8,13,23,26; 18:5,13,16-18; 19:10,12; 20:2,8,26,28; 21:1,14; 22:29; 24:21-25; 25:1-7; 26:1,6,8; 27:23-27; 28:2,4-5,15-17,21; 29:2-4,12,14; 30:29-31; 31:1,3-5,9,9

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

1. How are we parallel to “kings” and “judges”? How can we apply these instructions to our lives?

- All Christians are considered **priests** (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10):
  - Offering “sacrifice of praise, fruit of our lips, giving thanks” (Hebrews 13:15).
  - Helping those in need around us (Hebrews 13:16).
  - Offering “incense” through prayer (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4).
  - Mediating on others’ behalf through prayer (1 John 5:15-16).

*And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. (1 John 5:15-16)*

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

1. How are we parallel to “kings” and “judges”? How can we apply these instructions to our lives?

- All Christians are considered *priests* (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10):
  - Offering “*sacrifice of praise, fruit of our lips, giving thanks*” (Hebrews 13:15).
  - Helping those in need around us (Hebrews 13:16).
  - Offering “*incense*” through prayer (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4).
  - Mediating on others’ behalf through prayer (1 John 5:15-16).
  - Mediating on God’s behalf through evangelism & teaching (1 Peter 2:9-12; Matthew 5:9-16).
- Christians are also considered as *kings, royalty* (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:8-10; Exodus 19:6) – children of the King!
  - Kings vary in expanse of reign, but they are all still kings. ... *Begin at home.*

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**The Power of a Bribe**

2. How can justice be perverted? What is the short-term reward for injustice, and what is its long-term consequence (13:23; 15:27; 17:8, 13, 23; 18:5, 16; 21:14; 24:23-25; 28:17; 29:4, 14)?

*A present is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor; Wherever he turns, he prospers. (17:8)*

*A man’s gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men. (18:16)*

*A gift in secret pacifies anger. And a bribe behind the back, strong wrath. (21:14)*

- Bribes influence anyone in a position of judgment or decision, creating an audience with important people or even avoiding terrible judgment.
- Any persuasion accomplished with a bribe will require bribes to maintain.

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**The Power of a Bribe**

2. How can justice be perverted? What is the short-term reward for injustice, and what is its long-term consequence (13:23; 15:27; 17:8, 13, 23; 18:5, 16; 21:14; 24:23-25; 28:17, 21; 29:4, 14)?

*Whoever rewards evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house. (17:13)*

*A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit; Let no one help him. (28:17)*

- Perverting justice stains one hands with blood, which brings doom on him. *Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor; And for lack of justice there is waste. (13:23)*
- The king who judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever. (29:14)*
- Standing for truth, justice – no matter – is only way to preserve self, family.

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

- Also described as “*gods*” – mighty ones in judgment.
- Points to powerful influence, judgment, ability make significant change in government and communities (Psalm 82:1-8; John 10:35-36).

*God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. How long will you judge unjustly. And show partiality to the wicked? Selah Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know, nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, “You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men. And fall like one of the princes.” Arise, O God, judge the earth; For You shall inherit all nations. (Psalm 82:1-8)*

362

**The Power of a Bribe**

2. How can justice be perverted? What is the short-term reward for injustice, and what is its long-term consequence (13:23; 15:27; 17:8, 13, 23; 18:5, 16; 21:14; 24:23-25; 28:17, 21; 29:4, 14)?

*He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, But he who hates bribes will live. (15:27)*

- People accept (or demand) bribes to get rich, more power. Why is that bad?
- To show partiality is not good. *Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress. (28:21)*
- Encourages and increases sin, lowering people’s “selling point”.
- A wicked man accepts a bribe behind the back To pervert the ways of justice. (17:23)*

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**King of Kings, Lord of Lords**

*The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD. Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes. (21:1)*

3. Why is it important for everyone to remember that the king ultimately answers to God and can be manipulated by Him (21:1)? Can you think of Old Testament examples of such manipulation that led to a king’s judgment and destruction?

- All kings ultimately answer to God – not beyond judgment (Daniel 4:19-28).
- All subjects ultimately answer to God – obey God (Acts 5:29)!
- Examples of Obstinace: Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:1-37); Pharaoh (Exodus 1-15); Ahab (1 Kings 22); Absalom (2 Samuel 15:31-37; 17:1-14); David (2 Samuel 24:1).

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**Priests, Kings, and “gods”?**

- Also described as “*gods*” – mighty ones in judgment.
- Points to powerful influence, judgment, ability make significant change (Psalm 82:1-8; John 10:35-36).
- Do not read too much into this or think too highly of self (1 Cor. 4:6).
- Power is inherent in power of words & actions – not you.
- Lesson:** More influence, control, responsibility, potential than you realize.
- You can be like a king or a judge, who holds court, offers judgment, and leads others, or a priest offering worship, mediating between man and God.
- Do not expect too much too soon. Prove yourself (Luke 16:10-12).
- In the above perspective, advice on serving as a king, judge becomes powerfully applicable and near to us. ... Written for ox or us (1 Cor. 9:9)?

363

**The Power of a Bribe**

2. How can justice be perverted? What is the short-term reward for injustice, and what is its long-term consequence (13:23; 15:27; 17:8, 13, 23; 18:5, 16; 21:14; 24:23-25; 28:17, 21; 29:4, 14)?

*These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment. He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,” Him the people will curse; Nations will abhor him. But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, And a good blessing will come upon them. (24:23-25)*

*It is not good to show partiality to the wicked, Or to overthrow the righteous in judgment. (18:5)*

*The king establishes the land by justice, But he who receives bribes overthrows it. (29:4)*

- Overthrowing justice ultimately overthrows one’s country, throne, and self!

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**The Throne of Judgment - Why?**

4. Why is it critical that a king make wise judgements (16:10; 17:7; 20:28; 25:4-5; 29:2; 31:3-5)?

*Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, Much less lying lips to a prince. (17:7)*

*Divination is on the lips of the king; His mouth must not transgress in judgment. (16:10)*

*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan. (29:2)*

- His judgments have so great an impact on the people, it is almost like God was speaking (compare to 2 Samuel 16:23).

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**The Throne of Judgment - Why?**

4. Why is it critical that a king make wise judgements (16:10; 17:7; 20:28; 25:4-5; 29:2; 31:3-5)?

*Mercy and truth preserve the king. And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne. (20:28)*

*Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry. Take away the wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness. (25:4-5)*

- His position as king depends on his judgments!
- Failure will result in a brief rule, ending in assassination, coup, or revolution.

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**Fierce Wrath and Fleeting Favor**

6. How is the king's wrath like a "roaring lion" and his favor like "a cloud of the latter rain", and therefore how should his servants and followers consider this in their behavior (16:15; 19:12; 20:2; 24:21-22; 25:3)?

*As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, So the heart of kings is unsearchable. (25:3)*

*The wrath of a king is like the roaring of a lion; Whoever provokes him to anger sins against his own life. (20:2)*

*My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two can bring? (24:21-22)*

- A king's fierce wrath may be triggered easily, unexpectedly. Be careful!

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**Abuses of Power**

8. What danger is present for people in authority who are filled with wrath (17:26; 28:15-16)?

*Also, to punish the righteous is not good, Nor to strike princes for their uprightness. (17:26)*

- Those highest in authority must still be approachable, able to take correction. They cannot strike down those willing to correct them.

*Like a roaring lion and a charging bear Is a wicked ruler over poor people. A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, But he who hates covetousness will prolong his days. (28:15-16)*

- Those highest in authority cannot take advantage of their authority to exploit others and crush them, whether for labor, resources, or finances.

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**The Throne of Judgment - Why?**

4. Why is it critical that a king make wise judgements (16:10; 17:7; 20:28; 25:4-5; 29:2; 31:3-5)?

*Do not give your strength to women, Nor your ways to that which destroys kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted. (31:3-5)*

- King must avoid anything that will affect his judgment, resulting in injustice.
- How can a leader ensure that he is making fair, accurate, and perceptive judgments?

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**Fierce Wrath and Fleeting Favor**

6. How is the king's wrath like a "roaring lion" and his favor like "a cloud of the latter rain", and therefore how should his servants and followers consider this in their behavior (16:15; 19:12; 20:2; 24:21-22; 25:3)?

*The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, But his favor is like dew on the grass. (19:12)*

*In the light of the king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud of the latter rain. (16:15)*

- However, his favor – although precious, like life itself – can easily evaporate, if it materializes at all.
- It can also quickly turn into "roaring", if not careful.

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**A King Alone**

9. How might a king become paranoid? What is its danger, and how does he avoid it (29:12)?

*If a ruler pays attention to lies, All his servants become wicked. (29:12)*

- Kings – to some extent – are always in danger of losing their kingdom to assassins and revolutions (24:21-22).
- Must not become cavalier or oblivious to possibility of overthrow.
- But, must not unjustly execute based on suspicion; otherwise, overthrow.
- Key is to not turn a blind eye but investigate reports carefully (20:8; 20:26; 18:13, 18:17).
- Why would faithful servants, well treated and regarded, suddenly turn treasonous, assuming they are well treated and regarded (1 Kings 12:6-16)?

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**The Throne of Judgment - How?**

5. How does a king make wise judgements (18:13, 17; 20:8, 26; 25:2)?

*A king who sits on the throne of judgment Scatters all evil with his eyes. (20:8)*

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. (25:2)*

- Don't rush to judgment. Look carefully into each matter. ... How?

*A wise king sifts out the wicked, And brings the threshing wheel over them. (20:26)*

*He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him. ... The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him. (18:13, 17)*

- Must question, examine, and cross-examine. Establish witness credibility.

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**"You shall be cut in pieces!"**

*As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it. (16:14)*

7. What Old Testament character wisely preserved his life and the life of his friends when the king sent "messengers of death" to kill them in his "wrath" (16:14)?

- Daniel asked reason for urgency and then requested some time to satisfy king's request (Daniel 2:1-25).
- Daniel could not have made his request, if he had not already established himself with the king and the captain of the king's guard. (You never know when you might need to "call in a favor" and borrow from the investment of trust and reputation.)

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**An Honored, Confident King**

*In a multitude of people is a king's honor, But in the lack of people is the downfall of a prince. (14:28)*

*There are three things which are majestic in pace, Yes, four which are stately in walk: A lion, which is mighty among beasts And does not turn away from any; A greyhound, A male goat also, And a king whose troops are with him. (30:29-31)*

10. How does the number of people a king rules – or any leader oversees – indicate the success of the king (14:28; 30:29-31), and why not wealth or land area?

- Failure to govern well results in loss or fleeing of people.
- People are the ultimate "resource". A large number of well managed united people can do anything, assuming it pleases God (Genesis 11:5-8).

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**Wisdom of Justice**

11. Similarly, what other attributes bring honor or dishonor to a people and its king (14:34; 28:2, 4-5, 16; 31:8-9)?

*Righteousness exalts a nation. But sin is a reproach to any people. (14:34)*  
*Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; But by a man of understanding and knowledge Right will be prolonged. ... Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, But such as keep the law contend with them. Evil men do not understand justice, But those who seek the LORD understand all. (28:2, 4-5)*  
*Open your mouth for the speechless. In the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy. (31:8-9)*

- Both the king – and its people – must stand for right, justice, and mercy.

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**A King's Cabinet**

12. What kind of help does a king – or any leader – need (13:17; 15:22; 31:1)? Consequently, what kind of people should a king – or any leader – generally promote or not (14:35; 16:13; 19:10; 22:29; 26:1, 6, 8)?

*Luxury is not fitting for a fool, Much less for a servant to rule over princes. (19:10)*  
*As snow in summer and rain in harvest, So honor is not fitting for a fool. (26:1)*  
*Like one who binds a stone in a sling Is he who gives honor to a fool. (26:8)*

- Do not promote those who are ill-suited or unprepared. It will only bring you great harm.

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**A King's Cabinet**

12. What kind of help does a king – or any leader – need (13:17; 15:22; 31:1)? Consequently, what kind of people should a king – or any leader – generally promote or not (14:35; 16:13; 19:10; 22:29; 26:1, 6, 8)?

*Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established. (15:22)*  
*Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And they love him who speaks what is right. (16:13)*  
*The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him: (31:1)*

- Kings need many wise counselors to be successful. Well-worded wisdom, which may come from parents or previous generations.

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**Trust, But Verify**

13. Why is it important for a king to “know the state of your flocks” (27:23-27)? How would a king – or any leader – balance this responsibility with the innumerable detailed decisions that must be made every day as part of his kingdom? How could this be applied to a household or a business?

*Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, And attend to your herds; For riches are not forever, Nor does a crown endure to all generations. When the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, The lambs will provide your clothing, And the goats the price of a field; You shall have enough goats' milk for your food, For the food of your household, And the nourishment of your maidservants. (27:23-27)*

- Even kings must periodically check on status of all aspects of their kingdom to verify – but also encourage faithfulness of workers.

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**A King's Cabinet**

12. What kind of help does a king – or any leader – need (13:17; 15:22; 31:1)? Consequently, what kind of people should a king – or any leader – generally promote or not (14:35; 16:13; 19:10; 22:29; 26:1, 6, 8)?

*A wicked messenger falls into trouble, But a faithful ambassador brings health. (13:17)*  
*The king's favor is toward a wise servant, But his wrath is against him who causes shame. (14:35)*  
*He who sends a message by the hand of a fool Cuts off his own feet and drinks violence. (26:6)*

- Identify and promote faithful staff, who will promptly execute or represent.

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**Drawing Straws**

14. What technique can any judge or leader use to resolve many disputes (18:18)? What similar technique may parents use to keep quarreling children apart? Is this a cowardly way to avoid performing one's duty as a judge, leader or parent? Explain.

*Casting lots causes contentions to cease, And keeps the mighty apart. (18:18)*

- Taking turns or “drawing straws” can be used to settle issues that must be settled but cannot be.
- Not cowardly, if only used as “last resort”, if careful investigation is performed first.

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