

1  **Proverbs**

Terrell Bible Church  
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2  **Proverbs Bibliography**

Here are some books that have helped me in my study of Proverbs:

- Charles Bridges (1794-1869), *Proverbs*
- Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890), *Proverbs* in the Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*
- Derek Kidner (1913-2008), *Proverbs* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)
- George Lawson (1749-1820), *Commentary on Proverbs*
- William MacDonald (1917 -2007), *Enjoying the Proverbs*

3  **Authors**

- Solomon
  - 1:1 The Title
  - Chapters 1-9 (Instruction and exhortation)
  - 10:1-22:16 (Proverbs)
  - 22:17-24:34 (Proverbs collected by Solomon?)
  - 25-29 (Solomon's proverbs collected by Hezekiah)
- Agur, Chapter 30
- King Lemuel, Chapter 31

4  **Solomon**

1 Kings 4:29-34 NKJV

(29) And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

(30) Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

(31) For he was wiser than all men--than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

(32) He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

(33) Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.








(34) And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

5  **Proverb**

- "Proverb" (*mashal*, מָשָׁל) most basically means "to compare to, to be like."
- The basic form is parallelism (comparison and contrast are two of the most common).
- A proverb is a short, pithy statement of truth or practical insight.
- PITH'Y, a. Consisting of pith; containing pith; abounding with pith; as a pithy substance; a pithy stem.
  - 1. Containing concentrated force; forcible; energetic; as a pithy word or expression.
  - This pithy speech prevailed and all agreed.

6  **Wisdom**

- The basic meaning of "wisdom" (*chokmah*, חֵכֶמָה) is skill
- Exodus 28:3 NKJV So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.
- Exodus 31:3 NKJV And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,
- Wisdom is skill for living

- 7  **Wisdom**  
 Wisdom is, I suppose, the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the more fools for what they know. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.  
 CH Spurgeon
- 8  **Proverbs are practical insights for life, but not always absolute statements of invariable truth.**  
 Proverbs 10:27 NKJV  
 The fear of the LORD prolongs days,  
 But the years of the wicked will be shortened.  
 Proverbs 22:4 NKJV  
 By humility and the fear of the LORD  
 Are riches and honor and life.  
 Proverbs 26:4-5 NKJV  
 Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
 Lest you also be like him.  
 Answer a fool according to his folly,  
 Lest he be wise in his own eyes.
- 9  **Proverbs**  
 The Naive
- 10  **The Naive**  
 1. The Hebrew term is *peti*.  
 • The noun is used 14x in Proverbs  
 • The basic meaning of the root verb (*patah*) is to be spacious, wide, open.  
 • The idea, then, is that the naive ("simple" in KJV) is open to influence, they are not discriminating. A biblical "air head." The verb can mean "to deceive" or "entice" (e.g. 1:10). A naive person is easily deceived, enticed, influenced.  
 • His greatest need is prudence, the ability to evaluate and discern.
- 11  **The Naive**  
 2. The Naive Man  
 A. Attitudes  
 1. Loves his openness (1:22).  
 2. Wayward (1:32).  
 3. Lacks sense (7:7).
- 12  **The Naive**  
 2. The Naive man.  
 B. Actions.  
 1. Believes everything (14:15).  
 2. Goes on, no caution (22:3; 27:12).  
 3. Wanders into trouble (7:8, 10).  
 4. Follows immoral influence (7:22).
- 13  **The Naive**  
 2. The Naive Man  
 C. Results.  
 1. Death (1:32).

2. Inherit folly (14:18).
3. Penalty (22:3; 27:12).
4. The destruction of an immoral life (7:22-23).

14  **The Naive**

3. How to relate to the naive.
  - A. Observe and learn (7:7).
    -
  4. Help for the naive.
    - A. Study Proverbs (1:4).
    - B. Accept the offer of wisdom (8:5; 9:4).
    - C. Learn from the punishment of the scoffer (19:25; 21:11).

15  **Proverbs**

The Fool

16  **The Fool—Terms**

- Three Hebrew terms for fool:
  - *Kesil* (כָּסִיל)—thick, fat, plump. More of intellectual thickness/dullness. Slow, thick thinking. (49x in Proverbs)
  - *Ewil* (אָוִיל)—also has the idea of thick, but moral thickness, insensitivity. (19x in Proverbs).
  - *Nabal* (נָבַל)—morally, intellectually, spiritually insensitive. cf. Ps. 14:1 and Abigail's husband. (noun 3x in Proverbs, verb 1x). This is the fool who is hardened in rejecting God.

17  **The Fool—Attitudes**

- 1. Despises wisdom (1:7E; 1:22K).
- This is the basic problem. He rejects wisdom, and the Lord at the same time.
- 2. Complacent (1:32K).
- This fits with thickness. He is intellectually and spiritually lazy; he has no desire or aspiration for the things of the Lord or for life in general. He is happy with life as it is; "don't rock the boat." What is terrifying is that this describes much of America, and, unfortunately, much of professing Christianity in America. We are satisfied with what we have in the Lord. We don't want to grow, we don't want to be changed, we want to maintain. That is folly!
- 3. Delight in wickedness (10:23K; 13:19K).
- Stated positively (10:23) and negatively (13:19), the fool's problem is basically moral. The fool is not one who lacks mental ability, he is one who has a moral/spiritual problem. That is the perspective on wisdom/folly of Proverbs.

18  **The Fool—Attitudes**

- 5. Deceitful (14:8K).
- A fool's immorality includes deceit.
- 6. Mock at sin (14:9E).
- There is anything but repentance and sorrow over sin in the life of the fool. His thick head and heart are too insensitive to feel guilt.
- 7. Arrogant and careless (14:16K).
- Whereas the wise man fears (*yarê*—used of fear of the Lord) and turns from evil, the fool boldly and confidently (*bôteach* - trusting) walks straight ahead. No sense of his weakness or sinfulness; only full self-confidence (as opposed to the fear of the Lord). A wise man will not expose himself to the potential of evil - he fears his weakness and the devastation of

sin; the fool has no godly fear, and walks into the trap.

19  **The Fool—Attitudes**

- 8. Quick tempered (14:17E).
- I would render it "The quick tempered man does (or will do, imperfect of *'asah*) folly." A quick temper leads to foolish actions. A fool will be seen by the fact that he is quick to anger. It is interesting that this is mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:3 as disqualifying a man from eldership. This is one area I warn young people about in choosing a mate. A man of anger brings destruction!
- 9. Despises parents (15:20K).
- The family is an important area for seeing the manifestation of a fool.
- 10. Not teachable (17:10K).
- This, again, fits with his thick head and skin. He has all the answers. He doesn't need advice or correction.
- 11. No regard for the value of wisdom (17:16K; 18:2K).

20  **The Fool—Attitudes**

- 12. No concentration (17:24K).
- Like the wandering eyes of a bored student on a warm spring day, the fool's heart and mind lack the discipline and concentration to focus his attention on learning wisdom.
- 13. Heart rages against the Lord (19:3E).
- His problem is moral/spiritual.
- 14. Inseparable from his folly (27:22E).
- Here we see that the fool (and this is the second degree fool) is in deeper trouble than the naive. He is very hard to reach.

21  **The Fool—Actions**

- 1. Displays dishonor (3:35K).
- Instead of honor, the fool is disgraced.
- 2. Foolish woman is boisterous (9:13K).
- Folly is portrayed as a foolish (immoral/adulterous) woman. Part of that description is that she is loud. Contrast to 1 Peter 3:4.
- 3. Babbles (10:8E, 10E).
- Too much talk brings trouble, and the fool is seen by his babbling mouth (lit. he is called a fool of lips).
- 4. Spreads slander (10:18K).

22  **The Fool—Actions**

- 5. Expresses his anger (12:16E; 27:3E; 29:11K).
- This may be saying of the wise man that he covers, endures without visible anger, the dishonor that is spitefully dealt to him. How does a man deal with provocation? The fool's anger is known! The wise man controls!
- 6. Proclaims folly (12:23K; 15:2K; 15:14K; 18:2K).
- The wise doesn't display all that he knows; he is quiet and listens and learns more. The fool is quick to offer his opinion - which only shows how shallow and mistaken he is once his ideas are known.
- 7. Displays folly (13:16K; 14:24K).
- His actions show his character - that is so important a theme in Proverbs - watch people and you will know their character (unless you are too busy trying to display your "knowledge.").

23  **The Fool—Actions**

- 8. Rejects parental discipline (15:5E).
- Not teachable!
- 9. Quick to quarrel (20:3K).
- The fool displays his dishonorable character by how quick he is to quarrel. Wisdom calls us to control and a quiet spirit. The fool is too quick to speak, to defend himself and to argue

for his point. Do you see someone who controls his tongue (and emotional display) in the face of obvious provocation (harsh words in a meeting, unjust accusation, etc.)? Honor him! Respect him: learn from him, get closer to him as a friend, consider him for a mate, hire him, work for him, etc.

- 10. Squanders rather than saves (21:20K).
- A sure indicator about a person is his finances. A fool overspends. A wise man saves and, therefore, has enough to enjoy. You get the impression from this proverb that the fool has squandered without any sense of enjoyment or even an appreciation of what he had. We in America are so wealthy. But we are so quick to spend we don't appreciate or enjoy what the Lord has given.

#### 24 **The Fool—Actions**

- 11. Returns to his folly (26:11K).
- It's in his character to be a fool. A fool will show himself a fool in character by the fact that he returns to his folly. He may seem to change, but if his nature doesn't change by the grace of God, then he will ultimately be found out by reverting. Note how revolting folly is: it is like vomit. One good evidence of regeneration is when the sin that used to characterize our lives now seems like vomit (26:11) or "rubbish" (Philippians 3:8). This proverb is cited in 2 Peter 2:2 to speak of the unregenerate apostate; this helps indicate that the folly is moral and spiritual problem.
- 12. Exalts self (30:32N).
- Consistent with the third degree fool's character, he exalts himself (rather than God). How often we have seen that it is part of rebellious folly to exalt self and ignore God. What does that tell us of the character of our society. This verse also gives the clue to help for the fool, for each of us—repent. Either to trust Christ for salvation, or return or renew ourselves to submission to Him—the fear of the Lord.

#### 25 **The Fool—Results**

- 1. Discipline (7:22E; 16:22E; 19:29K).
- "*shphatim* never means judgment which a court of justice inflicts, but is always used of judgments of God, even although they are inflicted by human instrumentality ... " (Keil and Delitsch, sv. 19:29). Fools will eventually bear the consequences of their folly.
- 2. Grief to parents (10:1K; 17:21aK, 21bN, 25K; 19:13K).
- The word for destruction in 19:13 is the plural of *havah*. It has the idea of a chasm, an engulfing ruin. The plural is intensive! Job uses the plural to describe his circumstances, Job 6:30. The foolish son wreaks havoc that leaves a cavernous crater of destruction. What a heart-sickening emptiness and bitter sorrow the parents of a fool experience!
- 3. Will be thrown down (10:8E, 10E).
- The statement of the fate of the babbling fool is exactly the same in each of these verses. KD (10:8) says that the idea is to be thrown to the ground. It would appear that this is a picture of total ruin or devastation.

#### 26 **The Fool—Results**

- 4. Mouth brings ruin (10:14E; 18:7K).
- "Ruin" in 10:14 is *mehitah*—terror, destruction, ruin. The vagueness of the ruin may be intentional. Anyone in the vicinity may be hurt when he speaks his folly. The nearness of the ruin means "an always threatening and unexpectedly occurring calamity; unexpectedly because suddenly he blunders out with his inconsiderate shame bringing talk." (KD 218). When the fool speaks, the wise hold their breath with fearful anticipation. 18:7 is more specific in stating that it is the fool who suffers (not saying others don't).
- 5. Mouth brings him punishment (14:3E).
- Whereas the wise man's mouth serves him well, the fool's tongue is the whip that strikes him.
- 6. Death (10:21E).
- The wise provides for many. Wisdom produces blessing in abundance. The fool can't even

provide for himself. Does this tell us anything about the source of poverty in individuals and nations?

27  **The Fool—Results**

- 7. Will serve the wise (11:29E).
- Similar to the previous. Wisdom leads to abundance (the ability to have servants) while folly leads to lack—requiring the fool to serve rather than lead. Being a property owner or an owner of the means of making wealth may be (though not always) a sign of godly wisdom, not wicked oppression.
- 8. Companions suffer harm (13:20K).
- Fools hurt not only themselves; if you are foolish enough to keep their company, you, too, will suffer.
- 9. Ruins her home (14:1E).
- This proverb speaks of the powerful woman in the home. The Bible does not speak negatively of women; it honors them. The Book of Proverbs gives great weight to the influence of a woman on the character and results of a home. The language describes the family as a building. A woman can either build it or tear it down (the verb *hrs* is used often of tearing down altars). The reference to her own hands is to emphasize her personal responsibility. Women, realize your importance to the home and maximize your opportunity.

28  **The Fool—Results**

- 10. Excellent speech is inappropriate in his mouth (17:7N).
- The term for excellent (*yeter*) can mean either excess or preeminence. KD (p. 357) takes it as words "of superabundant self-consciousness and high pretension." Such a base man should not speak so highly, but should hold his himself back. It is annoying, irritating, etc. (not fitting) to hear a fool speaking as if he were someone of prominence or importance. One expects foolish ideas, but when he tries to speak nobly it just isn't right.
- 11. Wise speech (proverbs) is inappropriate in his mouth (26:7K; 26:9K).
- Just as noble speech doesn't belong in his mouth, so wise words don't belong. He may be able to quote the words of a proverb, but he doesn't understand or know how to apply them.
- 12. Mouth brings strife and conflict (18:6K).
- The fool stirs up trouble. He incites anger and violence. This is one reason his companions get into trouble - he always is stirring it up.
- 13. His folly subverts his own way (19:3E).
- The fool brings calamity on himself, and then blames God. How often we see this. People utterly disregard God's principles in their lives, it leads to disaster, then they blame God for their problems; He is not fair to let them suffer like this!

29  **The Fool—Results**


- 14. Luxury is inappropriate to him (19:10K).
- Luxury is just not fitting for a fool. He hasn't earned it, he misuses it. Look at the utter folly in the use of wealth gained by some we call stars/celebrities. But what does this proverb teach us about the way we should treat criminals? What about welfare?
- 15. Honor is inappropriate to him (26:1K; 26:8K).
- Yet in our society we honor some of the greatest fools. Those who live lives in utter disregard and rebellion against God, we hold up as our modern heroes. Honor is not fitting to those who live foolishly. Honor should be the result and reward of living wisely (therefore, let's hold such up to honor, let us choose heroes who have character). To give honor to fools, is like tying a stone in a sling - the opposite of what we should do. The whole point of a sling is that the stone is to be thrown from it, not kept in it. Honoring a fool is the opposite of what we should do.
- 16. Wisdom is foreign to him (24:7E).
- Wisdom is beyond him and he does not belong in the courts, legislature or as a counselor.

It is frightening to think of how many fools have the most powerful places of influence in our land. Perhaps these outlines should be consulted before voting in the next election.


- 17. He does not gain prominence in the community (24:7E).
- This refers to not being in the gate. This assumes a society that is functioning correctly.

30  **The Fool—How to Relate**

- A. Leave his presence (14:7K).
- The Hebrew of this verse is debated. The NASB seems (to me) to be the best rendering. The first part of the verse is clearest - leave the presence of a fool. It appears that the second part of the verse gives the motive. To not leave the presence of the fool will cause the lack of knowledge. This may mean lack of wise words while with the fool. I.e., you won't hear wisdom in his company. The general nature of the warning, however, seems to me to indicate that the fool's constant company will lead to folly on the part of his companion. This is consistent with other proverbs. Companionship with fools will rob you of the opportunity to gain wisdom and will also cause lack of wisdom (through spiritual/intellectual/moral dullness?). Folly is contagious!
- B. Beware, he can be dangerous (17:12K).
- This proverb depicts the fool as bull-headed. He is convinced of the rightness of his folly and he won't be dissuaded. Get out of his way.
- C. Don't speak wisdom in his presence (23:9K).
- Literally the injunction says "Don't speak in the ears of the fool ..." The idea is one more of direct address than of "in his presence." I.e. don't try to teach him wisdom; he will only despise you for it. Again we see his stubborn, self-centered, thick-headed nature.

31  **The Fool—How to Relate**

- D. With a rod (26:3K).
- The fool does not listen to reason; he is not teachable. His nature (like that of the animals named) requires physical restraint, not reason. What does this teach us about the most common answer our society offers for problems—education? Cf. this proverb to Ps. 32:8-9.
- E. Don't answer him according to his folly (26:4K).
- It seems that this and the next verse use the expression "according to" (the Hebrew preposition *k, כ*) with different nuances. This is to stimulate meditation. Here the idea is don't answer him in a way that is similar to his folly—don't stoop to his foolish level. In the next verse it has the idea of answering in a way that is consistent with what he deserves or needs to hear. In this verse the warning is that if we stoop to his level we will become like him. We will become a fool if we try to reason with a fool in his foolish way. This may include the tone of the discussion (don't become bitter, shouting, etc.), the assumptions of the discussion (don't let the fool set the agenda by agreeing to argue on his turf. This may warn against getting into philosophical arguments that ignore the revelation of the Bible; such speculation is sheer folly. Many a Bible believing Christian has been devastated by studying at secular schools and learning to discuss philosophy, religion or even the Bible on a secular/atheistic level. It tarnishes them. Cf. Criswell's remark, "You can't walk through a coal mine without getting dirty."), etc.

32  **The Fool—How to Relate**

- F. Do answer him according to his folly (26:5K).
- Here we are to answer a fool in a way that is consistent with his folly. The implication in the warning is that we are to rebuke and not tolerate his folly. To allow a fool to continue in his folly will only increase his foolish pride. This should be balanced with other proverbs that warn against trying to reason with a fool. This proverb may not be speaking as much as how to discuss with a fool as how to deal with him—i.e. as his folly deserves—with the rod.
- G. Don't debate him (29:9E).
- The wise man who seeks to reason and come to a fair settlement of an argument with the fool will either encounter outbreaks of anger or mocking, but no peace coming from

settlement. That is not possible because he is thick, arrogant, and right in his own eyes (and unable to gain the upper hand in a debate and, in frustration, must resort to emotion.). If you find yourself unable to reason with someone before he rages or mocks, don't become like him (26:4), realize you're dealing with a fool.

- H. Don't hire him (26:10K).
- If you hire a fool (or an unknown passerby) you cause risk to yourself and others. It may be that by giving him responsibility that affects others, many suffer. You don't hurt just yourself when you hire a fool.

### 33 **The Fool—How to Relate**

- I. Don't satisfy his needs (30:21-22N).
- Apparently his prosperity (I choose this word because of the word that emphasizes fullness, satiety) makes him more of a fool and more dangerous than ever. His poverty (the result of his folly) keeps him humble. He is so foolish that if you prosper him he will take the credit and will lose motivation for change as well.

### 34 **The Fool—Hope**

- A. Accept the offer of wisdom (8:5K).
- Repent! Realize that you have tried to live independently of God and His will. Forsake trusting in yourself and accept the offer of wisdom and grace.
- B. Keep quiet (17:28E).
- A fool can avoid a lot of trouble by just shutting his mouth. "Better to be silent and thought a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

### 35 **Proverbs**

The Wise

### 36 **The Wise—Attitudes**

1. Teachable (1:5; 9:8, 9; 10:8, 14; 18:15).
  - A true sign of wisdom is the desire and willingness to learn; the absence of the attitude that they have all the answers (cf. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12). It is important that this is one of the first traits we see in the wise man. It reminds us that the wise man has not arrived, but he is making good progress on the right path.
  - 1:5 A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,
  - 9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning.
  - 18:15 The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

### 37 **The Wise—Attitudes**

2. Reprovable (9:8; 13:1; 25:12).
  - Criticism is hard for most of us to take. A wise man, because of his humble awareness that he is not perfect, is willing and even eager (he considers it an asset—like an earring) to be corrected.
  - 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

### 38 **The Wise—Attitudes**

3. Listens to advice (12:15; 20:18; 24:5-6).
  - This fits together with the previous two points; the wise man realizes his limitations and seeks to gain the wisdom and counsel of others. He is not indecisive as the fool might reckon him, he makes his own decision, but he hears the options and especially weighs the words of wise men.
4. Cautious, turns from evil (14:16).
  - The wise man knows he is a sinner who can fall. He avoids evil, flees immorality. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13 and Joseph with Potiphar's wife.

### 39 **The Wise—Activities**

1. Gathers in summer (hard worker) (10:5). The summer was the key time of harvest in



Israeli harvest (BKC, OT, p. 127).

2. Controls his tongue (10: 19).

- "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

*Thomas Jefferson*

3. Tongue blesses, doesn't hurt (12:18; 15:2, 7).

#### 40 **Proverbs 12:18**

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His Father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence....

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there."

A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.

#### 41 **The Wise—Activities**

4. Persuasive speech (16:23).

5. Appeases anger (16:14; 29:8).

#### 42 **The Wise—Activities**

6. Doesn't get drunk (20:1).

- Self control, not yielding control to ungodly influences, is a key sign of a wise man.

7. Saves, doesn't squander (21:20) [Often I have noted that some wealthy people I have met seem frugal and I have assumed there was a relationship between their wealth and the fact that they don't spend lavishly. That is what this proverb teaches].

8. Controls his temper (29:11).

- Again note the self control.

#### 43 **The Wise—Benefits**

1. Honor (3:35).

- Note that one is given honor the other dispenses dishonor.

2. Self benefit (9:12).

- Some of these qualities and actions might seem like too much effort or "no fun." In reality, these are not meant to ruin our life, but to make it all that our loving Creator meant it to be!!

#### 44 **The Wise—Benefits**

3. Glad parents (10:1; 15:20; 23:15; 23:24; 27:11).

- How many parents will proclaim a loud amen to this concept. It is interesting to me that this aspect of the wise man has more verses than any other. Solomon had a foolish son that destroyed the kingdom! Parents, if this is true, the greatest source of joy (and to avoid the greatest source of grief) train your child in wisdom. Teach them its value and its path—by your words and your actions. If we fail our children in this regard, we will feel the weight of sorrow in our maturity.

#### 45 **The Wise—Benefits**

4. Wins souls (11:30).

- The second statement literally says that a wise man takes souls. The idea is that he attracts and influences others to the path of wisdom. This has applications to evangelism,

but it is much broader than that.

5. Tongue doesn't get into trouble (14:3).

- The fool's tongue is his own greatest scourge, he constantly brings grief on himself by his own fast acting tongue. The wise man's restraint and good words work to his benefit.

6. Wealth (14:24).

- a good example of general truth

46  **The Wise—Benefits**

7. Good favor with superiors (14:35).

- This has applications for the boss and the employee. Boss: don't hire a fool, he will only bring shame, sorrow and anger. Employees, be wise and you will advance in your field. Look at Joseph and Daniel for the ultimate examples.

8. Promotion over more likely candidates (17:2).

- This correlates with the previous point.

47  **Becoming Wise**

1. Observe nature (6:6; 30:24-28).

- You can start on this path by just reflecting on what these proverbs are trying to teach. As you learn the message, look for other similar lessons in nature. God created by wisdom and, so, creation will reflect His wisdom. Also, learn from biographies and watching the lives of others.

2. Heed instruction (8:33; 19:20).

- Compare this to the first characteristic: TEACHABLE.

48  **Becoming Wise**

3. Choose wise friends (13:20).

- This is true for all ages, but it especially concerns me with our young people. The types of people that our young people that we allow our youth to associate with can have such beneficial or such devastating results. This applies as well to the company they keep in their reading and their TV viewing. Do we expose our children to wise people? Do we guard them from fools? This is important to consider in choosing the schooling for our children. How about ourselves?

4. Listen to reproof (15:31).

49  **Proverbs**

Government

50  **Government**

Government seems to be an important topic in the Book of Proverbs. This is possibly because of the authors that contributed to the book. We know that Solomon was an important contributor. We often forget that at least two other kings had a role in the book: Hezekiah had some of his men gather Solomonic proverbs to add to the collection (25:1). King Lemuel added the words that had been passed on to him by his mother (31:1). With three kings involved in the composition of the book, is it any wonder that godly wisdom for government should be a significant topic addressed?

51  **Government**

It is obvious why the human authors would want to discuss government in Proverbs, but why should we be interested?

1. The Divine Author decided to include the information - He wants us to know and understand it.

2. God's people will want to know how to pray for their governmental leaders.

3. We in the USA have the privilege of choosing our rulers and voting on many of our laws. We should know what honors God in a ruler (so that we know how to vote), what He says makes a successful leader, and what governmental policies please Him and what policies displease Him.

4. Principles of leadership on a national level can also be applied on many other levels of leadership - work, the church, home, etc.

52  **What characterizes good leaders?**

a. Wise men (8:15-16).

Wisdom causes men to rise to positions of authority and gives them the needed skills of leadership and judicial insight.

b. Diligent men (12:24).

Leadership authority and privilege are seen as the results, fruits, and rewards of diligence.

Lazy people don't achieve success in life, diligent people do. The Heb. for diligent is *charuts* (חָרוץ)—sharp, diligent. It is also used in Pr. in 21:5; and is contrasted to *remiyah* (רַמְיָה) (laxness, slackness, derived from a verb meaning loose, in 10:4; 12:24, 27 and *'atsel* (עֲצֵל) (sluggish, lazy, sluggard) in 13:4.

53  **What characterizes good leaders?**

c. Careful research (25:2)

God designs, man discovers. As the Creator, God has built mysteries into creation. As a ruler, a king should seek to uncover all that he can so that his decisions are built on solid information. This means he should study all aspects of an action (as much as possible) before making a decision. This would also speak of the absolute necessity of good "intelligence" into what our enemies are doing. We cannot negotiate or do battle effectively without good information. This is the main point. It brings glory to a king to act on information, not emotion, impressions, ignorance, etc. This is true for all of us. Study the options and implications of a decision before you act.

54  **What characterizes good leaders?**

d. Not slaves (19:10; 30:21-22).

The impression that is given is that the slave is not one who has earned the right to rule. He is ill-equipped for the task and will have problems with arrogance and pride. Choose a leader (if you have a say in the matter!!) who has proved himself, has worked hard to attain to the position and who is ready for the position. Don't let frustration with past rulers cause you to appoint people that are so removed from the political machinery that they are not equipped for the task. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:6 - not a new convert as an elder; Isa. 3:4-5 - children as kings is a judgment from God.

55  **What makes for a great country?**

a. A large population (14:28).

It is interesting to contrast this to the attitude of the Planned Parenthood types today that are seeking to minimize and even reverse population growth. God says that a large population is a blessing (just like a large family). By way of contrast, a small population leads to ruin. I think of the population controls being enforced in China today. How will a work force half the size of the present one be able to support the elderly. I fear that we are only beginning to see what "population control" means. Will the next phase be "death control?" It is in a multitude of people that a country has its greatest resource. Tragically, we have allowed society to influence us into thinking that a large population (beginning with a large family) is a curse and a liability. God says that it is a glory (*hadarah*, הַדָּרָה).

When I think of what leaders should try to attract to the community, it seems that the most important asset is quality people: wise, diligent, godly.

56  **What makes for a great country?**

b. Removal of the wicked from the staff (25:4-5).

Silver alloyed with impurity is unattractive and worth less. When the impurities are removed, it is a beautiful and valuable commodity. When rulers are "alloyed" by association with wicked advisors and staff, it pollutes their reign/administration. Toleration of deceit and corruption will only tarnish the ruler's reign.

c. Righteousness (14:34; 29:2; 11:10; 16:12; 28:12).

29:2—When godly people are in adequate number to have a dominant influence on society, it leads to a happier society. This is contrary to what so many say to say; they claim that life would be miserable if Christians were allowed to have a dominant influence. This verse gives


encouragement to realize that we are not forcing our narrow-minded ideas on society, we are seeking to make this a better place to live. Note the method, however. It is done by increasing the number of the righteous. I.e., evangelism and discipleship. This is the report of history as well. As evangelistic revivals swept a society, laws were not needed to change society; the merchants of immorality quit due to lack of business. This passage assumes God's people will live God's values and will, thus have a positive influence on society. Cf. Rom. 12:1-2.

14:34—Do we want exaltation or reproach?

11:10—A wise nation rejoices when righteousness prevails.

16:12—Righteousness establishes a nation

28:12—Glory when the righteous prevail.

57  **What makes for a great country?**

d. Justice (29:4; 20:8, 26).

29:4—Justice, the rule of law, gives a land stability and blessing. The rule of favoritism, privilege, and corruption destroys a land.

20:8, 26—punishment of the wicked is essential for a healthy nation.

58  **Whom should the government honor/reward?**

a. Those who serve wisely, not shamefully (14:35).

Hebrew of shameful is *mebish* (מְבִישׁ), to cause to shame or act shamefully. In 10:5 the same contrast is used. There wise action is gathering in the summer, the shameful action is sleeping during the harvest. In 19:26 the shameful act is violence toward parents. This proverb, then, is not saying as much who should be rewarded as the truth that there are rewards or punishments for behavior in the king's service. Wise behavior brings reward; shameful behavior (e.g. ineffectiveness, wickedness) brings punishment (the king's anger).

b. Those who speak righteous words (16:13; 22:11b).

c. The pure in heart (22:11a)

59  **Whom should the government honor/reward?**

d. Skilled workers (22:29).

This verse has interesting implications for the Christian in the work place. 1. It says that our work speaks for us, we don't have to promote ourselves, we need only give our best effort to our work. 2. It promises reward and especially advancement/notoriety to the good worker. Often I have been asked if a Christian should strive for advancement; this verse teaches that advancement is the result of good work. This would indicate that though our concern should be the quality of our work (leaving the advancement to God), lack of advancement may mean lack of diligence!

60  **What are governmental responsibilities?**

a. Correct decisions (16:10).

God holds the leader accountable for his decisions. The Hebrew for a divine decision is *qesem* (קֶסֶם). It usually means a divination, a negative/pagan idea. This unusual usage seems to mean that the king utters an inspired judgment. It does seem best to take it as a figurative expression of the weight that the king's judgments carry. Because of their importance, he is commanded not to err.

b. Righteousness (16:12; 20:28b; 28:15).

God considers a wicked government an abomination. Righteousness gives stability and longevity to a nation (20:28).

c. Honesty (17:7).

61  **Daniel Webster (jurist and senator)**

[I]f we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.

(Source: Daniel Webster, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster* (Boston: Little,

Brown, & Company, 1903), Vol. XIII, p. 492. From "The Dignity and Importance of History," February 23, 1852.)

62  **George Washington on religion and morality in government**

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of man and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice?

And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who, that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

(Source: George Washington, *Address of George Washington, President of the United States . . . Preparatory to His Declination* (Baltimore: George and Henry S. Keatinge), pp. 22-23. In his Farewell Address to the United States in 1796.)

63  **Quotes from some Founders**

Samuel Adams

- "He who is void of virtuous attachments in private life is, or very soon will be, void of all regard for his country. There is seldom an instance of a man guilty of betraying his country, who had not before lost the feeling of moral obligations in his private connections." --in a [letter to James Warren, Nov. 4, 1775](#)

John Adams

- "Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand. [June 21, 1776](#)

64  **Jefferson on God and the nation**

"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God ? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath ? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever." [Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 18]

65  **What are governmental responsibilities?**

d. Impartiality (17:23; 24:23; 28:21).

One of the signs of the desperate condition of many third world countries is how much of the bureaucracy is fueled by bribery. In the second two proverbs listed above the Heb. for partiality is lit. "the recognition of faces" (*haker panim*, הַכֵּר פָּנִים). When a leader treats favors some over others, either because of bribery or familiarity, it is evil.

e. Righteous judgment (17:15; 18:5; 20:8; 28:16).

Reversing the right course of judgment by favoring the wicked or condemning the righteous is "not good." Note that 20:8 gives a benefit of good government - the dispersal (*mezareh* (מְזַרֵה)— to scatter, fan winnow, of evil. In 28:16 "unjust gain" is *betsa'* (בִּצְעַ) - gain made by violence .

66  **What are governmental responsibilities?**

g. Loyalty/Mercy and truth (20:28).

"Loyalty" is better translated "mercy" (*hesed*, חֶסֶד) .

Gill has this comment on 20:28:

"Which are two good qualifications in a prince; not ruling his subjects with rigour and cruelty, but with tenderness and clemency; easing them as much as he can of burdens and pressures; showing compassion to the distressed, and pardoning delinquents when the case will admit of it; as also being faithful to his word, promises, and engagements; inviolably adhering to the laws and constitution of the nation, and steady in his administrations of justice; these preserve him in the affections of his people, and make him safe and secure on his throne; and because of these the Lord preserves him from his enemies."

Good government must have the balance of mercy/kindness and truth. This word pair is also seen in 3:3 and 14:22.


h. Careful research (25:2). (See above)

67  **What authority does the government have?**

a. The power to execute (16:14; 20:2).

b. The ability to bring joy or sorrow (16:15; 19:12; 21:15; 29:2).

21:15 - the word for terror is *mechitah* (מַחֲתָה)- ruin, terror, destruction. It derives from *chatah* (חָתָה)- to be shattered, dismayed. A government that is doing its job will give joy and peace to its upright citizens, but will terrify the evil-doer. It is a sign of the collapse of a society and its failure in its divinely appointed task when lawful citizens live in fear and dismay, but the criminal acts with impunity.

68  **How should we relate to our leaders?**

a. Watch out for hidden motives when they are generous too you (23:1-3).

This would have lots of applications in so many of the offers of governmental help today - especially in the family. Beware of governmental help - it also comes attached to strings that bring greater governmental control. E.g., tuition vouchers could lead to governmental control of school. Governmental funding of church ministries could lead to governmental control on hiring (e.g. the Salvation Army in New York having to hire homosexuals).

b. Fear (honor, respect) the king (24:21-22).

Note that revolution is not godly. We are to avoid those who are revolutionary since both the king and God are opposed to them.

c. Don't praise yourself; let him do that (25:6-7).

d. Persuade with patience (25:15).

The main point here is to show that patience can be so effective that even a king can be persuaded. But we can learn, relative to relations to rulers, that patience is an importance tool. Some that get irate and threaten government leaders only close the ears of the one they are trying to persuade. Use soft words - they are much more likely to penetrate.

69  **The leader's personal requirements**

a. Godly wisdom (8:15-16).

This is said more to exalt wisdom than to speak of the nature of government. Wisdom is the method of decision-making used by the most powerful in the land; we should follow their example and desire the insights that they have. The problem this verse gives is the question of how this relates to ungodly and foolish leaders. It would seem fair to say that good kings are in view, not the wicked; and Proverbs does recognize the existence of wicked rulers. The point of the proverb is that we should desire what it is that makes the most powerful people in the world successful; that is wisdom.

70  **The leader's personal requirements**

b. Moral purity (31:3).

Cf. 5:9-11. Adultery leads to devastating consequences; a wise king will not fall prey to his many opportunities to sin. What an indictment as we have recently been hearing of the immorality of past presidents and present congressional leaders.


c. Abstinence (31:4-7).

Cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; 8; Tit. 1:7 - the elder and deacon are not to have alcohol problems. The king is warned that alcohol can diminish effectiveness and lead to improper actions. Alcohol is not for the strong, it is for the weak and sick - not exactly what the commercials tell us!

71  **Who rules the ruler?**

God directs the heart of the king (21:1).

When we are inclined to worry and fret over the course our government (or another government) takes, we need to remember that God is sovereign over the hearts of the rulers. God is not surprised, defeated or worried about man's decisions or actions.

72  **Don't put your trust in the ruler (29:26).**

The word for favor is literally "face." In other words many seek justice by trying to get the king to pay attention to them. This may not condemn letter-writing campaigns, etc. But it reminds us that the key to justice is not in fallible, wicked man. He may not have the time to notice us or the inclination. God has both for His people. This should be read in conjunction with 28:9 - the prayers of the ungodly are not only not heard by God, they are an abomination. How can any hope to have access to God? Through Jesus Christ - Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22.

73  **Proverbs**

The Family

74  **The Family**

- The First Biblical Institution: Family

- God has established only three institutions in the Scriptures: the family, the church and government. It may have some significance that the first institution He ordained was the family. We see the establishment of the family by the second chapter of Genesis—as soon as man and woman are created (Gen. 2:24).

- God not only exalted the family in His plan for Creation, He also exalted the family in the giving of the Law to Israel. Paul observed that the first of commandment with a promise related to the family. Paul felt this showed the importance God attached to the family when He distinguished it in this way. Cf. Eph. 6:1-2.

- The New Testament also bestows great honor on the family by using it as a picture of the relationship of Christ to His people (Husband to wife, Eph. 5:22-33) and as a picture of our relationship to God, calling Him our Father (1 John 3:1-2). In fact, just as the Bible is quick to mention the family (by the second chapter) so it is faithful to mention the family right up to the end. In Rev. 21 (the second to last chapter) the eternal city, New Jerusalem, is called "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." (21:9-10).

75  **The Family**

1. The family as the laboratory of life

The instructions and exhortations of the majority of the book are couched in the context of family. How often the words, "my son" are seen in this book: 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1-9 (three generations! Maybe the exhortation from David explains the request from Solomon when offered a blessing from God, 1 Kg. 3:4-9), 10, 20; 5:1, 7; 6:1, 20; 7:1, 24 ... 31:1-2. These verses show that wisdom is to be primarily communicated in the home and much of it is to either lived out in the home or it will have ramifications for the home

76  **The Family**

2. The family is often the place of God's blessing

The absence of the mention of the husband in this way is probably due to the fact that the book is written as addressing sons.

a. Children are a blessing (23:23-24; cf. Ps. 127:3).

b. Fathers are a blessing (17:6b).

*Tipheret* (תִּפְאֶרֶת), the verb means to beautify or glorify. The noun means beauty or glory. It is used of finery, jewels, garments, etc. It is an attribute of YHWH. The

assumption of this verse would be that the father is godly/honorable. It is an encouragement to fathers to remember that their children delight to find honor and glory in their fathers.

77  **The Family**

c. Mothers are a blessing (31:28a).

Note that the context shows the basis for the praise of the mother - godliness, not charm or beauty.

d. Wives are a blessing (5:18; 12:4; 31:11-12; cf. Ecc. 9:9).

12:4 - *Ateret* (אֶטְרֵת) comes from the verb to surround. It is a crown or a wreath and symbolizes honor.

e. Grandchildren are a blessing (17:6a).

The term for crown is the same as in 12:4 above. Again, it assumed that the grandchildren are acting honorably.

78  **The Family**

3. The results of our actions often impact our families.

The following passages indicate that often in God's economy the consequences of our actions are felt at home. If we live in an unwise or ungodly fashion, it affects our family.

When we live wisely and righteously, our family will reap the benefits. Remember, you cannot think of yourself only. You affect others. The sharing of blessing or punishment is an indication of how strong the family tie is in the mind of God.

79  **Legacy**

*based on a study by R.A. Dugdale*

1 Jonathan Edwards

(1,394 descendants)

2 • Godly pastor in Great Awakening

• 13 college presidents

• 65 college professors

• 30 judges

• 100 lawyers

• 60 physicians

• 75 army and navy officers

• 100 pastors

• 60 authors of prominence

• 3 United States senators

• 80 public servants including governors and ministers to foreign countries, and one vice-president of the United States

3 Max Jukes

(1,200 descendants)

4 • Jukes had a drinking problem that kept him from holding a steady job ... he would leave his family for days and return drunk

• 310 were "professional paupers"

• These were in poor houses the equivalent of 2,300 years.

• 300 died in infancy due to poor care

• 50 women lived in "notorious debauchery"

• 130 were convicted criminal

• 7 murderers

• 6 habitual thieves

• Only 20 learned a trade, 10 of those in prison.

80  **The Family**

a. Positive results.



(1). Righteousness (12:7; 14:11b; 15:6; 20:7).

(2). Wisdom (24:3-4).

b. Negative results.

(1). Wickedness (14:11a).

(2). Pride (15:25).

(3). Illicit gain (15:27).

(4). Revenge (17:13).

#### 81 **Marriage**

1. The blessings of marriage.

Note, again, that the perspective of the book is masculine. A father is teaching his sons. This leads to the instructions regarding spouses to refer to wives. Women and girls—insert husband in most of these.

a. An excellent wife is a crown (12:4a).

We mentioned this verse in the previous section. It shows that the husband who has a godly wife is truly blessed. She is a blessing and honor to him. He is proud to let it be known that she is his wife. Have you ever been in the office of someone that was very proud of their degree? It is prominently displayed on the wall, and it will be mentioned in some point in the conversation. There was one professor I knew that would somehow always work in his doctoral degree—and would do so with a gesture toward the diploma on the wall. A godly, wise wife will be something that a husband will be proud to acknowledge as his. He will mention her, want you to meet her, etc.

#### 82 **Marriage**

b. A (good) wife is a blessing (18:22; 19:14).

18:22 - *ratson* (רצון), goodwill, favor, acceptance. It is used in Scripture of great and merciful blessing from the Lord. The verb has the idea of to be pleased with, to accept favorably. In Proverbs the noun is used in very similar constructions, here of the blessing of a wife, in 12:2 of the blessing that a good man receives from YHWH. This same expression of is used of wisdom in 8:35. Think of that! As highly regarded as wisdom is in this book, so is a good wife.

19:14 - People (i.e. parents) may bless us with material possessions. But a wise wife can only come from God. This shows how special she is. You cannot buy a good wife. She can only come from the Lord. This tells us to pray for our spouse (and that of our children). This tells us to beware of human strategies to get a spouse; while God do use human instrumentation, often man's ways are to gain man's goals (cf. 14:12).

#### 83 **Marriage**

c. The wise woman builds her home (14:1).

This verse shows the importance of the wife and mother to the state of the home. It is so clear that the wife and mother sets the tone of the home. Perhaps Paul has this in mind when he says that the woman shall be saved by child-bearing in 1 Tim. 2:15. The context in that passage is ministry. Perhaps women were wondering what significance they could have if they couldn't teach or lead in the church. Paul's answer is that they have a wonderful opportunity - in the home. Proverbs 14:1 indicates that a wise woman can build up the home. This seems to indicate that even if the husband is absent or negligent, the woman can still provide the kind of home environment that will be solid and beneficial. What a challenge to the ladies of the church. Are you in the home building business? What kind of a home are you building?

#### 84 **Marriage**

d. The excellent wife (31:10-31).

We will come back to this wonderful passage at a later time. But do note how exalted a picture is given of a godly women. She is no second class human; she wins the respect of those who know her best.

#### 85 **Marriage**

## 2. The sorrows of marriage.

a. A shameful wife brings grief (12:4b).

*Raqab* (רַקַּב), rottenness, decay. This word is used in Job of a worm-eaten tree (41:19). This shows that whereas a good marriage can bring joy and delight, a bad marriage can eat away at one's health—physically and emotionally. Our young people, in particular, need to realize how important it is to choose their mate carefully. Oh, the potential sorrow of an unwise and ungodly mate! For those of us who are already married, we need to realize how much we can affect our mate. We need to make sure that we are not the one who is causing rotten bones in the other. What if we are married to the one who acts shamefully (i.e. foolishly, e.g. in 10:5 this is used of the one who sleeps during the harvest)? We need to look daily to God for wisdom and strength to build our home by wisdom (14:1).

86  **Marriage**

b. A foolish woman destroys her home (14:1a).

As a wise woman can build her home, one who is foolish can tear it down. The picture is describing a home in terms of the physical structure of the house. The foolish woman tears down her home with her own bare hands. The ways this could be done are numerous. Lack of time at home (due to work, personal interests, even church), a negative, critical attitude toward husband and children, an ungodly tongue, foolish finances (how many husbands have been frustrated by foolish spending of their wives, how many wives have not had grocery money while their husbands had money for their hobbies, etc.). Once again, note that the wife has a profound influence at home. She sets the tone, good or bad. Young men, consider that potential mate by the standard of what your home would be like under her management. Ladies, what kind of home would that young man build? Wives, what sort of home are you constructing (or demolishing)?

87  **Marriage**

c. A contentious wife (19:13b; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15).

19:13b – *madon* (מַדוֹן). This comes from the word *din* (דִּין), judge/judgment. It has the idea of "strife, contention." *Deleph* (דִּלְפָּה), a dropping. *Tored* (טֹרֵד), continuous. Therefore, *deleph tored* is a continuous dripping. Kidner cites an Arabic proverb: "Three things make a house intolerable: *tak* (the leaking through of rain), *nak* (a wife's nagging) and *bak* (bugs)."

21:9 (=25:24)—Better to live in cramped space without a roof over your head than have a large, comfortable house with strife. This hammers home the importance of marital harmony. Possessions pale in significance next to a happy marriage. Guard your marriage; don't sacrifice for what is less important.

27:15 - *sagrir* (סִגְרִיר), steady, persistent rain (in this verse: on a day of torrential down pour). Note the similarity to 19:13. The key seems to be persistence. Everyone will quarrel or have strife at times. But if it is a continuous pattern, that is when it is so intolerable.

88  **Marriage**

d. An unloved woman that gets a husband (30:23).

Many commentators explain this by saying that she now is incredibly proud since, at long last, she has a husband, and, therefore, hard to live with. Can the simpler reading be that her husband did not love her when he married her (or ever) better explain the proverb. In the continuing sorrow of marriage without love there is distress for all affected. The term for unloved (שְׁנוּאָה) is also used in Genesis 29:31, 33 to describe Leah (cf. Deut. 21:15ff). I don't think we are to understand that she is "odious" (KJV), but that her husband did not love her since his affections were for his other wife.

89  **Parenting**


Before we learn how to raise children according to Proverbs, we should listen to some of the warnings about the importance of good parenting. One way this is seen is in the different results of parenting.

1. Foolish children.

How to get one:

a. It's how they all start (22:15).


The term for folly ( אִוְלַת *iwelet*) is not simply the fact that the child is naive; he is a fool, resistant to wisdom, at heart. "The educator's task is both to tear down and to build up; he has to eradicate as well as to implant." McKane, *Proverbs* p. 565.

90  **Parenting: How to get a foolish child**

b. It is a result of lack of discipline (22:15; 29:15).

Both verses indicate that folly is the natural tendency of a child. Loving discipline and reproof are God's provision to turn the child from the path of folly to the path of wisdom.

29:15—"who gets his own way" (NASB), "left to himself" (NKJV, ESV) is lit. "sent off," "sent away." ( מְשֻׁלַּח *Meshulach* ), The idea seems to suggest abandonment, neglect. Apparently the idea is that the child is sent off by the parents without their direction or discipline. This is especially clear in the context of the verse. The contrast is between loving discipline and neglectful lack of discipline. Not chastising a child is like sending the child alone and unprepared into the world.

91  **Parenting: How to get a wise child**

2. Wise children.

How to get one:

They are a result of discipline and reproof (29:15, 17).

Reproof (תּוֹכַחַת, *Tokachat*)—"argument, reproof." This noun is frequently in Proverbs: 1:23, 25, 30; 27:5; 3:11; 5:12; 10:17; 12:1; 13:8; 15:5, 10, 32; 6:23; 15:31; 29:1. The rod is corporal punishment and reproof is verbal. Note that they go together: verbal reproof needs to be strengthened by physical, as needed. Physical punishment without the verbal is abuse.

92  **Parenting: Instruction: the responsibility**

a. The father (2:1; 3:1; 4:1, 10, 20, etc.)

The role of the father in child training is paramount in Scripture. The Bible understands (and teaches) that the mother spends most of the time with the children, but the father is seen as the head of the home and is the one held most accountable by God for how the children are raised. So often today the mother is the one who does 99% of the parenting. Fathers often feel like strangers to their own children; they don't know their characteristics, their needs, their problems, etc. The fathers feel inadequate and lack confidence because of their lack of involvement. It is like some of the Sunday school situations. An adult with loads of wisdom, intelligence and knowledge will be timid and let a confident child run the show—because the child is familiar with the setting and the program and the adult is tentative due to lack of experience. The same thing is often true of a substitute or new teacher, they let the children run all over them because the children know the system. Fathers fall into a subtle cycle: since they are not with the child all day, they lack confidence in how to care for and how to direct the child; then, they don't spend time with their children due to lack of confidence, this lack of time and leadership leads to less and less time (or less and less meaningful time). Before too long the father has no significant role in the children's lives and feels like a stranger to them; what they *do* do with them is out of guilt (or under pressure from their wife). Fathers need to realize that they have a God-given role in the family. They need to rely on the Holy Spirit (and their wife) to do the job as a father. God never gives us a task without equipping us.

93  **Parenting: Instruction: the responsibility**

b. The mother (31:1, 26).

Mothers, don't let the emphasis on fathers make you feel left out. You have a vital role.

This is underscored in the last chapter. 31:1—the king is guided by what his mother taught him. Cf. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." 31:26—the bright, industrious, excellent woman teaches her children. This is not a second class job, it is the greatest job you can ever have.

94  **Parenting: Instruction: the responsibility**

c. both parents (1:8; 6:20).

Please note that in both of these verses the father, the head of the home, is showing some very important attitudes:

1. The parents are showing a united front to the children. They support each other. There are not two standards; they support each other.
2. There is no competition for affection or loyalty. Parents, support one another to your children. I have seen time and again that when one parent tries to undermine the love or respect of the other parent, it ends up backfiring in later years; the child resents the loss of a relationship and is bitter at being manipulated.

95  **Parenting: Instruction: the responsibility**

d. A family tradition/transmission (4:1-9).

What a blessedly rich heritage, to look back over the generations and recount the deeply held faith. Many have treasured the Bible that a grandfather lovingly marked with notes, etc. This is not mere religiosity, but vital faith, sincerely held and cherished. Do we treasure the godly heritage we have? Are we creating and transmitting a godly and wise heritage?

e. A parental responsibility.

Note that I cite no passages here. This is to show that God holds no one else responsible. Not the school teacher, not the government, not the church. It is up to the parents to teach the child. If they choose to delegate a part of that instruction, then God will hold them accountable for the choices they make: was the child's faith undermined (e.g., "Science" taught over Scripture)? Were his values corrupted (e.g., taught a valueless approach to life, love, etc)? Was his life corrupted by the peers among whom he learned? These questions must be asked of the church in which they are taught and the school or groups/clubs/teams in which they are taught.

96  **Parenting: Instruction: the content**

a. The Bible (1:1-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Book of Proverbs is written to give wisdom to people in every stage of life, from the simple/naive (1:4) to the wise (5). This book will give wisdom (1:2) that will equip for life (1:3) and build character (1:3). By the way, 1:6 says that the more you study the book, the more you will get out of it (since you will learn to understand proverbs, figure and riddles). Add to this 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and you will know to teach a child all of Scripture. Proverbs is filled with immensely practical teaching for life. But 2 Tim. 3:16-17 says that when one is equipped with the whole of Scripture, then he has all that he needs to lead a life that is pleasing to God. Note the progression: teaching, reproof, correction, training.

97  **Teach the Bible**

- teaching (*διδασκαλίαν, didaskalian*): The Bible is not based on man's observations, interpretations or speculations; it is God's revelation. Therefore, parents must use the Bible to teach their children truth. Teach the truth from the Bible. Teach about God, man, sin, salvation, GRACE and the other great truths of the Bible.
- reproof (*ἐλεγμόν, elegmon*): The Bible is to be used to show people their error. When you point out error in a child's behavior, point out how his behavior violates God's Word. E.g. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other" (Eph. 4:32) "Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification" (Eph. 4:29) "Let him who steals steal no longer" (Eph. 4:28) "Children obey your parents" (Eph. 6:4) "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1) "Grieve not the Spirit" (Eph. 4:30).

98  **Teach the Bible**

- correction (*ἐπανόρθωσιν, epanorthôsin*): the main idea in this term is RESTORATION. The Bible can help us to heal the hurts, repair the damage and restore our walk with the Lord.
- training (*παιδείαν, paideian*) in righteousness: The Bible is the source of positive and practical training for godly living in an ungodly world.

99  **Parenting: Instruction: the content**

b. The fear of the Lord (1:7; 9:10; 15:33).

Equipping our children means instructing them in Scripture. The first principle of Scripture is to be rightly related to God. The fear of the Lord is both the starting place of wisdom and the basis/foundation of wisdom. True understanding of life requires seeing life from God's perspective. True skill in life requires obedience to God's commands. The fear of the Lord means our awed, reverential response to God's character and power. It is significant that it is the Lord (covenant-keeping character) who is feared, not God (power).

100  **Parenting: Instruction: the content**

c. Warning against the dangers of life.

1. The enticement of sinners (1:10-19).

Good instruction must include warnings. We have not done our job if we only tell what to do, what is good. We must also tell what not to do, what is bad. I have come to realize this in my own preaching ministry. I have not completed my job if I only teach sound doctrine. I must also warn against false doctrine. Paul continually reminded elders (Acts 20—Ephesus; Titus 1:9) that they must confront error. Proper instruction must include warnings against that which is negative. Note how important warning is in Proverbs. Solomon has just introduced the title, the purpose, the theme and now he warns for several verses. We must tell what the dangers of life are, how to recognize them and how to deal with them. Note the content of the warning—the influence of friends. He tells his son that nothing will undermine the instruction of wisdom (1:1-6) and a relationship to the Lord (1:7) like bad friends. Parents, we must help our children to see that the wrong company can totally corrupt our lives. If this is true in terms of the company we keep, isn't it also true in less direct relationships? Like music—much of modern music "entice" to the sorts of things Solomon mentions: violence, immorality, rebellion, etc. Like films/videos/television—all of these promote actions and values that will undermine wisdom and destroy a walk with God. Have you noticed how vocabulary, clothing, and more come straight out of the media?

101  **Parenting: Instruction: the content**

2. The enticement of the adulteress (2:16; 5:8-23; 6:24-35; 7:6-27; 23:27-28; 29:3).

102  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

1. The main passages.

Note that once again them son is being addressed. This is why it is the woman that is warned against. Many of the warnings can be directly transferred to woman about men.

a. 2:(1-15+)16-19. Main idea: clinging to the teachings of wisdom (as communicated by the godly father) will avoid the pitfalls of the adulterous woman. It describes her (2:16-17) and the destruction she experiences and causes (2:18-19).

b. 5:1-23. Main idea: same as above. She is described (5:3, 6); her end is described (5:4-5); she is to be avoided (5:7-8); she brings destruction (5:9-14, 21-23).

c. 6:20-35. Main idea: same as above. She is described (6:24-25); she brings destruction (6:26-35).

d. 7:1-27. Main idea: same as above. She is described (7:5); an example of enticement is rehearsed (7:6-21); the end destruction is described (7:22-27).

e. 23:26-28 Warns against the dangers of the harlot.

f. 29:3. Warns against harlotry.

g. 31:3. Warns against harlotry.

Total verses in these contexts: 90 (=10.61%).

103  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

2. The description of the adulteress.

a. She leaves the companion of her youth (2:17a). The term companion *aluph* (אֱלֹפִי cf. 16:28; 17:9) stresses the intimacy of the relationship with her husband that she has abandoned. It is no stranger that she has left, but her dear friend, her husband. Cf. Mal.

2:13-16. Marriage is a binding covenant; God is the witness to it and hates the violation of it because it is so against His character to violate covenant.

b. She abandons God (2:17b).

The relationship to God is a covenant. Part of the OT covenant is the seventh commandment which specifically forbids adultery. Her adulterous actions show that she has abandoned any relationship with God. In the OT economy this means that she has abandoned the national covenant. This is not to say that she has lost her salvation. This passage describes a lifestyle; this woman was never saved (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

104  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

c. Her end is destruction (2:18; 5:4-5).

d. She flatters with smooth speech (5:3; 6:24; 7:5, 21).

This is one of the warning signs of the adulteress. She knows how to flatter. By her winsome words she will coax her victim to drop his defenses. She will appeal to his ego (7:15, "I have come out to meet you."). Beware of flattery; it is a favorite tool of those (male and female) who would seek to entice. Learn to recognize it; then flee.

e. She is ignorant of the danger of her own ways (5:6).

f. She seduces with her eyes (6:25).

How many an illicit relationship began with a flirtatious glance. Don't be entrapped. Don't do it!

105  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

g. She seduces with her dress (7:10).

The woman's dress tells much about her, her values and her intentions; she dresses seductively. Ladies, girls, how do you dress. Ladies/girls, do you dress to entice? to seduce? to attract attention to your body instead of your character? Is it too tight, too short or too low? Cf. 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4. Parents, what do you allow and encourage your daughters to wear? What does she communicate by her dress?

h. She is "cunning of heart." (7:10).

The Hebrew expression is *netsurat leb*. *ntsr* is to watch, guard, keep. The idea is that her dress may tell you something of her character and intentions, but she doesn't let you know her thoughts. Don't be fooled by her appearances; she has thoughts and plans that are deadly.

106  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

i. She is loud and rebellious (7:11).

This woman is not the model of 1 Tim. 2:11; 1 Ptr. 3:4. Note that these passages mention quiet and submission—the opposites of the immoral woman.

j. She abandons her home responsibilities (7:11-12).

She is the opposite of the virtuous woman of 31:10-31 who centers her energies at home. This woman wanders from home. Cf. Titus 2:5.

k. She knows how to set up an appealing situation (7:13-20).

1. She appeals to his ego - I came to meet you (15).
2. She acts outwardly religious (14). You can find her/him even in churches!
3. She may offer a wonderful meal - the peace offering feast (14).
4. She sets a sensuous stage (16-17). Many will set a stage of music, etc. to lower the resistance of their prey.
5. She says it is safe, the threat of discovery is gone. Many today reverse this by using the business trip to flee the dangers of discovery (19-20).

107  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

3. The danger of the adulteress.

She ruins her companions (2:19; 5:9-14, 20-23; 6:24-35; 7:22-27; 23:27-28; 29:3; 31:3).

a. Physically.

5:9, 11.

b. Financially (Cf. the prodigal son).

5:10; 6:26; 29:3.

c. Socially.  
6:33.

108  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

d. Morally.

2:19 fits here and/or spiritually. The path of immorality is inescapable, but for the grace of God.

23:28—she increases the number of the *bogdim* - those who are faithless/treacherous to the marriage bond (cf. Mal. 2). She entices to infidelity.

e. Spiritually.

5:20-23.

109  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

4. The avoidance of the adulteress.

a. Avoid enticing situations (7:8-9, 25).

Note the naive man was in the wrong neighborhood at the wrong time. We must not put ourselves in dangerous or potentially dangerous situations. If you develop a close relationship with someone of the opposite sex other than your spouse, you take a risk. If you read immoral literature or view immoral films, you may act on what you see. Parents, do we endanger our young when allow (or even encourage!!!) dating at a young age. If a girl of 13 has a boyfriend with whom she is dating, what is left for her to do in the next 13 years (or so) before marriage. We allow children to get to the very threshold of physical intimacy and then expect them to stay at that level, but go no further for over a decade, when they are young, naive, and unable to exercise such strong self-control. Is there any wonder that there is so much teen immorality. The vast majority of the dating patterns today are entirely patterned after ungodly practices, they are not biblical, moral or right. Why do we as Christians feel so compelled to follow the world in one of the most important areas of life our young people will ever face? Allowing young people the opportunity to spend time alone with the opposite sex is like driving that naive man to the door of the immoral woman and telling him to be careful. We need to tell our young people to stay out of the neighborhood!! Flee youthful lusts, don't taunt them! Cf. 2 Tim. 2:22.

110  **ADULTERY IN PROVERBS**

b. Avoid enticing people (5:8).

We need to avoid the type of people that are immoral. We need to help our children do the same thing.

c. Do not entertain enticing thoughts (6:25).

Cf. Mt. 5:28. Lustful thoughts are adultery. We are not to fantasize. It also is the weakening of the first wall of defense when we fantasize. This verse says do not desire the beauty of any woman but your own wife.

d. Receive God's provision (5:15-19; cf. 1 Cor. 7:1-5)

God has provided a good and holy way to enjoy the blessing of physical intimacy - marriage. For married people, meeting the needs of each other will go a long way in avoiding temptation.

e. Have God's Word in your heart (2:2-15; 5:2; cf. Ps. 119:9, 11)

The clear teaching of these passages is that if we will have our heart filled with God's Word, we will not fall to temptation. But this is not to be taken lightly. The Jews take these and other passages (most notably Dt. 6) too literally. They actually tie portions of Scripture to themselves. That is missing the point. If we know God's Word, if it fills our minds, and if we delight in it and live it, we will avoid this tragic sin. God's Word immunizes against sin. It fills my mind so that my thoughts are not captured by the ungodly.


111  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

• The terminology.

a. *Atsel*.

Sluggish, lazy


- b. *Remiyah*.  
Lax, slack, loose
- c. *Mitrapeh*.  
To sink, relax, let drop

112  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

• Characteristics:

1. Loves sleep (6:9-10; 24:33; 26:14).

Note the various stages of rest in 6:10: sleep (*shenot*, from *yashen* sleep.), slumber (*tnumot*, - "be drowsy, slumber ... inactivity, indolence"), rest (*chibuq*, folding, clasping, of the hands to *shakab*, "to lie down"). There is a progression from deeper levels of rest (sleep) to lesser levels (lie down). 26:14 is a very picturesque.

113  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

2. Doesn't finish a project (12:27a).

The Hebrew of this verse is difficult. The verb *charak* is a *hapax legomenon*. It seems best to give it the meaning "roast" as does the NASB. The idea, then is that the sluggard, if he does get up the energy to trap/hunt an animal, lets it go to waste because he does not bother to properly cook it. (He finds energy for "fun," but loses interest in work.) This is probably not a literal verse as much as a figurative way of saying, "what a waste!" To have caught a prey and then let it ruin because of laziness. And that is the tragedy of the sluggard; he causes waste and ruin by not completing what he starts.

114  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

3. Desires (13:4a; 21:25-26).

13:4a - *mitavah*, to desire, long for (e.g., thirst, hunger). The sluggard has desires and dreams for the finer things of life (as well as the more basic needs), but his lack of drive leads nowhere. 21:25-26 - His desires consume him, because they are not put into action. He dreams and covets, but he does not plan and act on his plan. He is contrasted to the righteous who gives generously. The one is all caught up in what he does not have; the other is satisfied and is more concerned about the needs of others.

115  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

4. Is unrighteous (15:19).

Note the contrast here is not with the diligent, but the upright. There are moral overtones in laziness. For one thing, he is neglecting his God-ordained responsibilities (to earn an honest wage - Eph. 4:28; 1 Thes. 4:11-12; to provide for his family - 1 Tim. 5:8), and may be lying, stealing, etc. to avoid honest labor.

5. Lets his work slide (18:9).

18:9 - the verb *mitrapeh* has the idea of letting drop, sink. He lets himself get lax, sloppy in his work. The verb form (*hithpael*) indicates that what he is allowing to drop is himself. He allows himself to ease up in the area of his task.

116  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

6. Lazy, lazy, lazy (19:24; 26:15)

These proverbs are nearly identical in saying (in hyperbole) that the sluggard is incredibly lazy. He is so lazy and sleepy that he falls asleep (perhaps) even as he eats.

7. He doesn't work ahead (20:4a).

After the harvest in the autumn is the time to plow for the next planting. The sluggard enjoys the fruit of the harvest, but doesn't like to plow in the cold (Nov.-Dec.). Plowing is hard work that has no immediate benefit (unlike picking/harvesting). It takes foresight and diligence to plow.

117  **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

8. He is quick to make excuses (22:13; 26:13).



You will be frustrated when you try to help him with advice on how to get a job or improve his situation. He has a thousand reasons why it can't be done, or he tried that and it didn't work.

Jim Berg (*Changed into His Image*) goes a step further and says that a man's response to a lion in the street *should* be to go get the lion before someone is hurt!

9. He lacks sense (24:30).

Literally, the expression means to "lack heart." It is only used in Proverbs and often is contrasted to having wisdom or discernment.

10. He is arrogant (26:16).

He won't listen to your exhortations or advice. He knows why it can't be done that way. His strategy is perfect, or his situation hopeless.

#### 118 **The sluggard in Proverbs**

• Results:

1. Poverty (6:11; 10:4a; 13:4; 20:4b; 24:30-34).

6:11; 24:34—Note the suddenness of the attack of poverty. The sluggard may be an expert at avoiding and putting off the consequences of his actions, but it does eventually catch up with him. When it does it will seem to him (and those lacking discernment) like an unexpected tragedy instead of the fruit of inaction.

In 10:4, note the contrast between negligent (lax, loose) and diligent (sharp). The easy going worker ends up poor; the hard, disciplined worker profits.

#### 119 **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

20:4b seems to indicate not that the sluggard begs, but that he seeks to find a crop, but there is none. Poverty comes to those who don't prepare in advance. This applies to work and to saving. One of America's big problems is that we don't save for the future. We are like the sluggard in this area, we don't want to pay the price of doing without in the present. The result is poverty in our old age. This becomes a national problem when politicians then seek to reward the lack of discipline and planning by having the government support them. The worst thing you can do for the sluggard is help him financially. You only confirm him in his ways. The only motivation he has to work and the only hope for change is that he will tire of hunger and want—16:26, "A worker's appetite works for him, For his hunger urges him *on*."

#### 120 **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

2. Irritation to his employer (10:26). This is a warning to those who hire people. Stay away from the sluggard; he will only bring irritation.

3. Becomes forced labor (12:24).

The word, in 12:24, for labor is *mas*. It usually has the idea of a collective noun for force laborers, task-workers, forced service, serfdom, etc. Here it has the idea of an individual in service that results from his poverty. Laziness leads to not getting ahead in life. Here it is seen as resulting in being at the bottom of the economic ladder, doing hard labor for minimal survival. Note: sloth ends up requiring more labor in the long run. Just as the sluggard has more weeds to clear (15:19), he ends up doing hard labor rather than becoming the manager of laborers.

#### 121 **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

4. Has a more difficult life (15:19a).


Because of laziness, the sluggard's life is more difficult. Because he does not take care of what he has, they break more often. He has problems with debt, inability to fix or replace things due to lack of finance, etc. Laziness is hard!!

#### 122 **The Sluggard in Proverbs**

5. Is destructive (18:9b; 24:30-31).

A job poorly done is just as damaging as work well done that is sabotaged. The only difference between these brothers (showing their similarity) is that one passively destroys, the other is active. Neglect is the same as assault. Think of the areas in which this could be applied - childrearing (no discipline destroys a child for life), construction (an unfinished job is not adequately protected), etc. We live in a fallen world. The Second Law of Thermodynamics reigns - all things tend to fall apart; lack of consistent maintenance leads to collapse. This applies to one's spiritual life - if you don't maintain it you wither and slide into sin. This applies to the church; if we don't continually labor to see it grow in depth and breadth, it will die. Think of what this means in light of the biblical teaching that we all have been appointed to use our gifts within the Church. If you are not fulfilling your responsibility in the church, you are actually damaging that area of the church. Deacons and elders - if you don't consistently labor at your area of responsibility, that area of the church life will collapse.

24:30-31 - note that you can spot a sluggard by taking a good look at his area of responsibility (home, yard, work place, personal appearance)!

123  **Kidner on the Sluggard**

I. THE SLUGGARD'S CHARACTER


The sluggard in Proverbs is a figure of tragi-comedy, with his sheer animal laziness (he is more than anchored to his bed: he is *hinged* to it, 26:14), his preposterous excuses ('there is a lion outside!' 26:13; 22:13) and his final helplessness.

*He will not begin things.* When we ask him (6:9,10) 'How long...?' 'When . . .?', we are being too definite for him. He doesn't know. All he knows is his delicious drowsiness; all he asks is a little respite: 'a little . . . a little . . . a little . . .'. He does not commit himself to a refusal, but deceives himself by the small-ness of his surrenders. So, by inches and minutes, his opportunity slips away.

*He will not finish things.* The rare effort of beginning has been too much; the impulse dies. So his quarry goes bad on him (12:27, AV, RV; see commentary) and his meal goes cold on him (19:24; 26:15).

3. *He will not face things.* He comes to believe his own excuses (perhaps there *is* a lion out there, 22:13), and to rationalize his laziness; for he is 'wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason' (26:16). Because he makes a habit of the soft choice (he 'will not plow by reason of the cold', 20:4, AV—see commentary) his character suffers as much as his business, so that he is implied in 15:19 (see commentary) to be fundamentally dishonest. (A suggestion of the way he would describe himself is made in the commentary on 26:13-16.)

4. Consequently he is *restless* (13:4; 21:25,26) with unsatisfied desire; *helpless* in face of the tangle of his affairs, which are like a 'hedge of thorns' (r 5:19); and *useless* — expensively (18:g) and exasperatingly (10:26) — to any who must employ him.

124  **Kidner on the Sluggard**

II. THE SLUGGARD'S LESSON

1. *By example.* The *locus classicus* is 6:6ff.: 'Go to the ant . . .'—for she shames the sluggard twice over. First, in needing no 'overseer' (7), whereas *he* must be prodded; he waits for it, resigned and defensive. Secondly, in 'knowing the time'. To him, all time is alike: summer and harvest (8) suggest long, languorous days (*cf.* 10:5), rather than the time of crisis in which the year's work will be crowned or cancelled, and the battle with winter decided (*cf.* Je. 8:20). Like the pharaoh of Jeremiah 46:17, 'he hath let the appointed time pass by'; like the slumbering watchmen of Isaiah 56:9-12, his motto is 'tomorrow shall be as to-day was, and braver, braver yet!' (Knox's translation).

2. *By experience.* This lesson comes too late. He will suddenly wake to find that poverty has *arrived* ('like a vagabond, . . . like an armed man', 6:II, RSV), and there is no arguing with it. Through shirking hard work he has qualified for drudgery (just when his too energetic

friend has risen to more rewarding duties, 12:24) ; and through procrastination the disorder of his life has become irreversible : all is wasteland (24:30,31).

`Then I beheld, and considered well: I saw, and received instruction' (24 :32). The wise man will learn while there is time. He knows that the sluggard is no freak, but, as often as not, an ordinary man who has made too many excuses, too many refusals and too many postponements. It has all been as imperceptible, and as pleasant, as falling asleep.

#### 125 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

- The terminology.

a. *Charuts*, sharp, diligent. m The literal idea is sharp. It is used of iron instruments, for example. In Joel 4:14 it is used of strict (i.e., a strict decision). b. *Meshachar*, to look early, diligently (from *shachar*, dawn). This gives the idea that what we do with diligence we don't put off; we do it quickly and early in our day.

#### 126 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

- Characteristics

1. He plans (21:5).

21:5— This is not the idle wishing of the sluggard; the plans of the diligent are put into action. But this does indicate that he doesn't just keep active; there is a plan and a purpose in his efforts. Cf. 24:27.

2. He does (10:4; 12:24; 13:4)

This is implied in multiple references to the "hand of the diligent." The hand is a symbol of action. Does the contrast in 10:4 between the diligent hand (*yad*—hand) and the slack hand (*kaph*—open palm).

The contrast in 13:4 is between the sluggard's fruitless craving/desire and the diligent's action that produces plenty ("fat").

#### 127 **The Diligent Does—Eat the Frog**

"Eat a live frog every morning, and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day."—Mark Twain

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#### 128 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

- Areas to apply diligence:

1. Seeking wisdom (8:17).

Note in 8:17 that wisdom should be one of the areas that we apply ourselves. Lit. we should seek her at dawn— a good prompter for morning devotions.

2. Seeking good (11:27).

11:27 - This verse tells us that there is to be a useful direction for our diligence. There are many who are diligent, but for all the wrong reasons and in all the wrong areas of life. 11:27b speaks to evil diligence, but we should also avoid wasted diligence. We are not to waste our diligence in activities that are vain and useless. I think of many who spend hours mastering the skills of video games or similar things (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27 contrasting the diligence of athletes to our diligence in eternally significant works). One commentator suggests that the second half of the verse interprets what is meant by "good" (*tob*). The idea of 27b is that one who seeks to prepare evil for another will find that it will backfire on him. That is the irony of 11:27b - he seeks it (for another) and finds it (for himself). The contrasted good in 11:27a, then, must have a similar nuance - good toward others. This proverb encourages us to seek to do that which is good for the welfare of others.

#### 129 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

3. Child-rearing (13:24).

The NASB is a little weak in 13:24b. It more accurately says that the father seeks the son early/diligently with discipline. The loving father applies himself diligently to his child with

discipline. It cannot be haphazard or as convenient. The idea of early discipline is also important - he doesn't put it off for a later time, he begins the process immediately (e.g. on the changing table as the child wriggles away the parent takes that as an opportunity to teach obedience). The earlier the child learns, the easier and better for all.

Children take labor . They are TRAINED, NOT left to fend for themselves and make their own decisions in life. 13:24 drives this home forcefully by saying that lack of diligence with discipline is a manifestation of hatred!

"It is painful to think how often we neglect our children, and then labor with agonizing prayer and heroic appeal for the conversion of men and women."— F. B. Meyer

### 130 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

• Results:

1. Wealth (10:4b; 12:27b; 21:5).

The contrast with 12:27a seems to be between the waste of the sluggard and the wealth of the diligent. The sluggard wastes what little he gets, the diligent's greatest asset is his industry. Diligence is better than wealth because it is the means to wealth. "Better to teach a man to fish than to give him a fish."

### 131 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

2. Abundant satisfaction (13:4b).

The fatness of the soul is a description of full blessing and satiety (cf. Ps. 63:5; 65:11). The fatness of the soul suggests more than simple physical blessing. The sluggard craves what he does not have, the diligent enjoys the fruit of his labor.

3. Leadership (12:24).

Hard work brings the reward of greater responsibility. This should guide us when we choose whom to promote at work. It would also guide us in choosing leadership at TBC—not only who has the character requirements of elder/deacon, but who are the workers.

### 132 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

• How do we get diligence?

1. CONSEQUENCES (16:26)

Hunger can be a consequence of laziness. By allowing someone to experience the consequences of their actions, it will motivate them to change. When we rescue the lazy from the consequences of his actions, we eliminate one of the Lord's tools to call them to repentance and change.

### 133 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

2. ENABLEMENT

1. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). In Proverbs this is expressed by the concept that diligence is a product of godly character.

a. Trust Christ for salvation. This is the starting point.

b. Depend on the Holy Spirit day-by-day and moment-by-moment for grace.

### 134 **The Diligent in Proverbs**

3. ATTITUDE

Do all to the glory of Christ, not self-satisfaction or human approval.

a. 1 Cor. 6:19-20. You are not your own. You do not have the right to be lazy.

b. Col. 3:17, 23. When we delight to please the heart of God by our sacrificial labor, we set standards for ourselves that are not possible for a sluggard. Ask yourself "Is this worthy of Christ? Is this the best I can do for Him?" This transforms any task. If you are a homemaker and are cleaning the kitchen for the 400th time this week, only to make one more meal, simply ask yourself the question, "Is this what the Lord would have me do? Is my labor for Him to prepare a meal for my family?" If that is your assignment from the Lord, then do it

unto Him, knowing that He DELIGHTS in a heart attitude of service for His pleasure.

c. Ecc. 9:10a. Whatever you do, do your best.

135  **Speech in Proverbs**

1. The importance of speech. (18:20-21)

"With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; he will be satisfied with the product of his lips." (18:20)

This verse is neutral in its approach. Whatever we speak, good or bad, will come back to us.

It is similar to the modern poem,

"I'm careful of the words I say,  
to keep them soft and sweet.

I never know from day to day  
which ones I'll have to eat."

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."  
(18:21)

136  **Speech in Proverbs**

2. Dishonesty

a. Don't do it (4:24; 24:28)

4:24—both terms have a sense of crooked, deceitful. Note that this follows immediately after a verse about watching the heart and what comes out of it.

a.

b. It is done by the wicked and the worthless (6:12; 17)

6:12—"worthless" is a compound of without (בְּלִי) and "worth" (יָעַל).

What does it mean to "walk" with a deceitful/perverse mouth? It reflects a lifestyle.

c. It conceals hatred (10:18).

This verse tells us that lying lips are evidence of concealed hatred. Also, that slander is the action of a fool—a moral rebel.

137  **Speech in Proverbs**

Dishonesty

d. It is an abomination (12:22).

The Lord has deep reactions to lying and truth. Why? (He is true and faithful.)

e. It is devastating to the victim (25:18).


Lying about someone is as hurtful as it is to do violence to them.

f. Words can conceal an evil heart (26:23-24).

An earthen vessel is cheap pottery. To overlay it with silver is to deceive, to cover up the cheap and make it appear to be a valuable vessel. Lying lips cover up the hate and wickedness in a heart.

g. It reflects hatred of the victim (26:28a).

Once again, note that hatred and lying go together.

138  **Speech in Proverbs**

4. Flattery Suggests insincere, false and selfishly motivated.

The Hebrew term has the idea of smoothness. It reminds me of our expression, "to butter someone up." Note the use of "slippery/smooth" Psalm 73:18.

a. Typical of an adulteress (2:16; 7:5, 21)

b. It brings ruin (26:28b).

Note the connection between lying and flattery. Both are deceptive and both are destructive.

139  **Speech in Proverbs**

c. Flattery does not bring lasting friends (28:23).

A rebuke is more of a blessing than flattery. Flattery feels good for the moment, but it is deceptive manipulation. A rebuke stings for the moment, but, when done in love, is a kindness that can make the recipient a better person.

d. Flattery is a snare since it encourages pride (29:5).

Pride is devastating. Flattery appeals to it—that is snare of a net.

"Usually some want of integrity has predisposed the mind for this poison." (Bridges, *Proverbs*, ad loc)

140  **Speech in Proverbs**

5. Praise (Contrast to flattery)

a. Don't praise (*halel*) yourself (27:2).

This is similar to Jesus' counsel to not take the best seat at the table. Lk. 14:8-11. In Jesus' teaching the point is that greatness before God is accomplished by humbling ourselves. John rebukes the Pharisees by saying that they loved the approval of men rather than that of God (Jn. 12:43). It is a warning sign about men and ministries when they invest a lot of time talking about how wonderful they are or how vital they are to God's program. Don't hunger and thirst after the praise of men. If it is to come at all, let it come at the initiation of others.

141  **Speech in Proverbs**

b. Praise (*halel*) tests your character (27:21).

Options:

1. You can tell a lot about a man by who praises (or criticizes) him. This is why advertisers use famous/trusted people to endorse their products. This is why politicians want to be seen with some and avoid others.

2. You can tell a lot about a man by what he praises. (KD suggests this possibility and then rejects it in light of 12:8)

3. Praise is a test—it will elicit humility or pride.

Cf. 17:3 where the first half of the verse is the same, but the second half says that it is the Lord that tests the heart. In 27:21 it would appear that the Lord uses the praise of men as one way to examine and purify us.

142  **Speech in Proverbs**

c. You reveal your character by whom you praise (28:4).

d. Praise is deserved by a godly woman (31:28, 30-31).

143  **Speech in Proverbs**

6. Speech of the adulteress

a. Flatters (2:16; 7:5, 21).

b. Sweet (5:3).

c. Smooth (5:3; 6:24).

d. Persuasive (7:21).

e. Is a deep pit of destruction (22:14)note that the wrath of God gives the sinner over to it, cf. Rom. 1:24, 26, 28.

144  **Speech in Proverbs**

7. Perverse speech

The ways and words of the wicked... are perverse (Pro 2:12). "Perverse" and perverseness (Pro 2:14) are the same word in Hebrew. Coming from the verb "to turn, turn from, overturn," they suggest something that is "turned away" from the normal. Such people turn away from the straight (lit., "upright"; cf. Pro 2:7) paths to dark (i.e., evil) ways. [*BKCOT* sv. Proverbs 2:11-15]

"Perversity ... as the contrast to truthfulness, rectitude, kindness" (KD on *seleph*, sv. 15:4).

a. The Lord hates it (8:13).

Wisdom is speaking in this verse. Perverse speaking is totally contrary to all that wisdom stands for.

145  **Speech in Proverbs**

b. It comes from the wicked (10:32).

Perverse speech is contrary to wisdom, it is perfectly fitting for wickedness. Our tongue reflects our character (Cf. Mt. 15:18; Lk. 6:43-45).

Perverse speech is contrary to wisdom, it is perfectly fitting for wickedness. Our tongue reflects our character (Cf. Mt. 15:18; Lk. 6:43-45).

Note the interesting expression. The lips of the righteous "know" (*yd'*) what is acceptable (NKJV is better here). The lips "know" in that they express what is in the heart and they express what is consistent with the character. In the same, the mouth of the wicked "knows" (assumed by parallelism) what is perverted—that is what is in character for the lips and heart of the wicked.

146  **Speech in Proverbs**

c. It crushes the spirit (15:4).

(*sheber* = "crushes", "breaking, fracture, crushing ... shatter," Strong's H7667). The wounded one is not the speaker, but the hearer. Our words can refresh, nurture, bless, heal (*marpe* = soothing. BDB says: "health, healing, cure") or crush, shatter, deeply wound. When our words seek to sooth we refresh and bless. When our words are lies, unkind, immoral - we crush the hearer. We all know the lift we get from a positive speaker and the sorrow of a perverse speaker.

d. It causes a fall into evil (17:20).

Perverse speech gets us into trouble. I.e., evil has more the idea of evil/injurious circumstances than that we do more evil things. We experience more distress, calamity, etc. when we have a perverse tongue.

147  **Speech in Proverbs**

e. It is better to be poor and honest (19:1).

This verse may suggest that the fool is rich. Better to poor and have integrity/moral innocence (*tam*) than to be (rich,) perverse and foolish. It seems that poverty of circumstances is the worst that the innocent man can have. Better to be in the lowest state in life with integrity than whatever folly and perversion can bring. Why better? Honor/reward from God, free conscience, etc. Character is more important than circumstances (Cf. Rom. 8:28 - the good is Christ-likeness).

148  **Speech in Proverbs**


8. Slander

a. Spread by a fool (10:18).

Here again we see that your mouth reveals your character. Spreading slander is characteristic of a fool - the man who is thick-headed and thick-hearted.

b. It is sweet to the listener (18:8; 26:22).

This is a truth we all recognize from experience. Slander is like a delicacy that is ravenously devoured when it is offered. Perhaps you have been at a party when a very popular snack or food has been put out. It is amazing to see how quickly it will disappear. Slander is like that. It does attract hearers and can even gain popularity to the one who speaks it. This proverb does not endorse slander (obviously!), it simply reports reality. This proverb must be taken together with the totality of Proverbs.

149  **Speech in Proverbs**

c. It causes anger (from the offended) (25:23).

This proverb gives the other side of the story. Just as slander is a sweet delicacy that delights the hearer, it is a bitter pill that brings anger from the victim. The illustration is that of weather. Just as the north wind brings rain—we, in Texas, know that the direction of the wind is a good indicator of the weather that is coming.

That sort of predictability and cause/effect relationship is true in the case of slander. If you want to see a countenance turn to anger, spread gossip and rumors about the person. It is only a matter of time before your words will be quoted to the person in question. We have seen this time and time again; gossip that was supposed to be secret works its way back to the victim. The only problem is that sometimes it gets worse the more often it is repeated. Do you want to keep your friends and avoid anger? Don't gossip or slander.

150  **Loose Lips Sink Ships**

151  **Speech in Proverbs**

9. Restraint—loose lips sink ships

a. Many words lead to sin (10:19).

This reflects how prone to trouble the tongue is. The less it is used the less opportunity there is to get into trouble. James calls it a fire (James 3:5-6). Fire can be used for good when it is controlled, when it is allowed to burn freely it can be devastating. So is the tongue; the more it moves, the more likely it is to cause pain, calamity and sin. Constant chatter opens the door to angry words, unkind words, dishonest words, boastful words, thoughtless words. It is amazing how the old proverb, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all" can put a damper on our conversations.

152  **Speech in Proverbs**

b. A guarded mouth preserves one's life (13:3; 21:23).

Rash promises → over commitment

Excessive words → betrayed confidences

Thoughtless words → unintentional pain

An unguarded mouth can lead to losses in finances (more commitments than our resources or loss of job or work do to offenses), friends (hurt feelings, unfulfilled promises), etc. An unguarded mouth, words spoken without thought or restraint, leads to sorrow and pain in every area of life: spiritual, emotional, physical, social, etc.

153  **Speech in Proverbs**

c. The righteous carefully considers his words (15:28).

This is the key. Think before you speak. The verse suggests that the righteous man says less; the wicked is described as pouring out words, the wise man is seen as thinking, not speaking. Think about your words: Are they edifying (Eph. 4:29)? Do they pass the test of Phil. 4:8? How will it effect the hearer? How will they understand and respond to my words?

154  **Speech in Proverbs**

d. Restraint reflects wisdom (10:19b; 17:27, 28).

The Hebrew for restrain in 10:19 is *chasak* (to withhold, refrain, keep back, keep in check).

The wise man is righteous in character. His control of his tongue spares him from the tendency to sin of the "chatter box."

In 17:27 the word for restraint is the same. The one who does it in this case is said to literally "know knowledge." Note that in parallel the idea is one of cool spirit (i.e., not hot-tempered). Much that is spoken in excess of speed and amount of verbiage is in anger. Wisdom and godly character lead to control. Cf. the fruit of the Spirit including self control. The hope for the fool to be thought wise by his silence is like our modern proverb, "Better to be silent and thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt." Cf. the illustration of Sir Isaac Newton, the famous physicist and mathematician. He also served in the Parliament of England. It is reported, "He rose to speak only once; the crowd went silent in anticipation of hearing the voice of greatness. Newton merely asked that a window be closed because of a draft." (*Dallas Morning News*, June 22, 1987). His silence (as well as his



reputation) caused the crowd to listen with respect when he spoke. If you are constantly speaking people learn to tune you out. If you are usually silent, they will listen to hear you. Whatever is rare is more valuable. By that measure, how much is your conversation worth?

155  **Speech in Proverbs**

e. Hasty words lead to trouble (29:20).

Haste is the Hebrew word *ats*. It is used 4x in Proverbs, always in a negative context (hasty feet to sin, haste to riches, haste as opposed to diligence, and here). It is interesting that the word also has the idea of being pressed. We often hurry because we feel some sort of pressure (real or imagined, external or self-imposed). When we hurry we make errors of judgment, etc. No where is this more evident and more disastrous than in our speech.

156  **Careless Talk Costs ...**

157  **Speech in Proverbs**

10. Good Words

a. Gentle words turn anger (15:1).

The Hebrew word for gentle is *rak*, "tender, delicate, soft". The term for harsh is *'etseb*, lit. "pain, hurt." Note that it is in the singular; it only takes one hurtful word to cause anger. Having problems with an angry spouse, employer, etc? Check your words. If they haven't been causing anger, have they been soothing it by their gentleness? Our first reaction to anger is usually anger in response; note that the tender word is a response to anger!

158  **Speech in Proverbs**

b. Soothing words give life (15:4).

Soothing, gentle, quieting words are a source of blessing and refreshing.

c. Pleasant words are pure (15:26) and healing (16:24).

- 15:26—Pleasant is *na'am*, "pleasant, delightful, lovely." This is the source of the name Naomi. Such words are morally pure, peasant and uplifting to the soul.

- 16:24—As the emotions do affect our physical health, they actually can heal as they lift the spirit. Cf. Phil. 4:8.

159  **Speech in Proverbs**

d. Sweet words persuade (16:21).

When we make our words sweet we are much more likely to win people to our side. Persuade, here, is *leqach* to learn or teach. Here it means teaching power, therefore, persuasiveness. People are much more likely to hear and respond favorably when your words are pleasant.

e. Words of knowledge are priceless (20:15).

Learn to value conversation filled with godly knowledge. In a society overcome with pursuit of material wealth, those who know the Lord will delight in godly wisdom. This will affect the church we choose (not based on outward appearances or good business opportunities), friends we choose, and the way we spend our time. Does your entertainment fit this description.

160  **Speech in Proverbs**

f. Gracious words make good friends (22:11).

Gracious words attract the best kinds of friends.

g. An appropriate word is lovely (25:11).

Not only must the word be right, it must be spoken at the right time. Cf. Eph. 4:29.

h. Soft words break bones (25:15).

"Soft is related to gentle of point a. above. These terms ("soft" ... "break") are apparently contradictory. A beautiful word picture. Soft words are so effective they can break bones - not hurtfully but in their depth of impact (in a positive way, of course, or they would

not be gentle).

161  **Speech in Proverbs**

i. Kind words are characteristic of godliness (31:26).

Her teaching is characterized by kindness (*chesed* - loyal kindness, love). Perhaps this indicates that the wisdom and teaching she gives to her family shows her wisdom and loyal kindness.

162  **Speech in Proverbs**

11. Effects of Speech

a. Positive

1. Righteous speech is valuable (10:20).

Note the parallelism between lips and heart. As we have already seen, you say what you are.

2. Righteous speech provides for many (10:21).

Righteous speech provides so abundantly that there is enough for the righteous one and others as well. The fool is not even able to supply for himself.

163  **Speech in Proverbs**

3. Righteous words exalt a city (11:11a).

It seems best by the parallelism to take the blessing here as that uttered by the righteous man. Perhaps the blessing is the prayers or the benedictions. Godly speech lifts up a society. The speech of the righteous encourages, blesses, and edifies. By example and influence, the speech of the righteous lifts the moral, spiritual, and emotional well-being of the city. This is also true in a church, family, or business. Is our speech lifting up our "city"?


164  **Speech in Proverbs**

4. Righteous words deliver the righteous (12:6b, 13b).

Godly speech keeps us out of trouble and helps us get out of trouble.

5. Good words satisfy with good (12:14; 13:2; 18:20).

Our words will bring fruit, good or bad, which we will "eat." Good words will result in greater prosperity and blessing. This reminds us that we are helping/hurting ourselves (as well as others) with our words and that our words have consequences.

165  **Speech in Proverbs**

6. Wise words bring healing (12:18b).

Words can hurt or nurture and heal. Wise words can sooth, calm, comfort and generally bless.

7. True words last (12:19a).

This proverb assures us of God's reward. True words will have a lasting effect; lies will be obliterated by God. This may have an eternal perspective (ultimately), though it is true that lies are ultimately discovered and rejected while truth is treasured and passed on.

166  **Speech in Proverbs**

8. Good words make glad (12:25).

Worry and fear only weigh us down. A good, encouraging, positive word can lift someone out of the depression brought on by anxiety. Therefore: 1. Don't dwell on fears but what is good. 2. Do others a great service by having a good word for them. 3. Fill your mind and mouth with good words.

9. Wise words preserve (14:3).

Foolish words get us into trouble; wise words keep us out of trouble. They avoid offense, turn anger, etc.

167  **Speech in Proverbs**

10. Gentle words turn anger (15:1).

11. Wise words are persuasive (15:2; 16:23).

12. Soothing words give life (15:4).

13. Wise words teach (15:7).

"Spread" (*zarah*) means to scatter, fan, winnow. The wise person's speech spreads godly knowledge and truth.

168  **Speech in Proverbs**

14. Joy and delight in appropriate speech (15:23).

The Hebrew is clear that the delight over the right answer is in the speaker. This is not boasting, but the simple recognition that an appropriate remark brings good results. Just as a craftsman has delight in something well made, not necessarily ungodly pride, but the joy of a job well done, so is an appropriate remark. The delight in the timely word seems more general—like the general joy in good workmanship. Good, appropriate words bring delight! This proverb challenges us to skillful use of our tongue - how much delight can we bring?

169  **Speech in Proverbs**

15. Righteous words bring delight and love (16:13).

Have we seen enough to begin to realize that uplifting speech, not gossip and perversion, is the key to joy, popularity, and the source of greatest blessing?

16. Sweet words are persuasive (16:21).

Again, not immoral words or lies. Persuade by pleasantly telling the truth. Proverbs has a lot to say to the salesman on how to convince.

170  **Speech in Proverbs**

17. Gracious words make good friends (22:11).

If all your friends like you for the wrong kind of speech (e.g. gossip, complaining); you have the wrong kind of friends.

18. Righteous words delight parents (23:15-16).

Upright speech is one way to honor our parents. Parents, have we communicated this idea to our children? By our example? By what we praise in their conversations?


171  **Speech in Proverbs**

19. A right answer is as pleasant as a kiss (24:26).

"Right" is *nekhochim* "straight, right." It seems that the idea of the term is similar to upright. It is the opposite of perverse or unjust.

20. A soft word breaks bones (25:15).

Be assured that soft word can have great effect; you don't have to shout. Speak softly and allow your words to sink in.

172  **Speech in Proverbs**

11. Effects of Speech

b. Negative

1. Foolish words bring ruin (10:14; 18:7).

Fools get themselves and their companions into trouble; this is most often accomplished by their uncontrolled tongue. Foolish words mean that ruin is nearby.

2. Godless words destroy a neighbor (11:9).

"Godless" is *chaneph*—profane, irreligious. The polluted (another rendering of the word) words that come from his mouth brings destruction. Words are not insignificant, they can have a devastating impact.

173  **Speech in Proverbs**

3. Wicked words destroy a city (11:11b)

4. Wicked words trap the wicked (12:6a, 13a).

5. Rash words wound like a sword (12:18a).

Words that just bubble forth without thought (cf. Leviticus 5:4) can wound like a thrusting sword. This verse contrasts such thoughtless words to the obviously pondered words of the wise that heal. Our words can wound or heal wounds depending on whether we think and weigh them before speaking. Note that sword-like words are rash (thoughtless) but not evil by intention. It is their very lack of intention (and therefore forethought) that makes them so potentially hurtful. Ps. 106:33 is a use of "rash"—Moses was provoked by anger and spoke unguardedly.

174  **Speech in Proverbs**

6. False words disappear (12:19b; 22:12).

7. Harsh words stir up anger (15:1).

Cf. above on the positive aspects of this verse. The word for harsh is pain, hurt. Words that hurt stir up anger. Note that it only takes one word (the Heb. is singular) to cause anger!

8. Perverse speech crushes the spirit (15:4).

Cf. 7.c. on this verse. Immoral, untrue, unkind words crush, break, shatter the spirit of the one who hears. Think of the harm we cause our friends when we speak words that twist away from God's perfect standard.

175  **Speech in Proverbs**

10. Perverse speech causes a fall (17:20).

Cf. 7.d. Perverse speech gets us into trouble. I.e. ra'ah has more the idea of evil/injurious circumstances than that we do more evil things.

11. Lying words give fleeting reward and certain punishment (21:6).

Note that there are rewards for lying; it does bring apparent success and prosperity; "It works." But it is like a morning mist that soon evaporates. Not only do the treasures vanish quickly, the path of deceit leads to death.

176  **Speech in Proverbs**

12. Slander causes anger in the offended (25:23).

There is a cause and effect relationship between the slander and the anger of the victim. If you want to see ice melt, pour hot water on it; if you want to make a friend angry, gossip about him.

177  **Backbiting tongue ... an angry countenance**

178  **Speech in Proverbs**

LISTENING

1. Don't listen to evil words (17:4).

Just as our lips reflect our heart, so do our ears. Note the character description of those who listen to evil words. We have discussed many aspects of how to speak and how not to speak, but there is also advice on how to listen; don't listen to evil. "Evil words die without a welcome." (Kidner). We could nullify much of the harm of ungodly speech if we should simply not give it an audience. Gossip dies without an audience.

2. Listen to wise words, study wisdom, and it will be readily available on your lips (22:17-18).

179  **Speech in James**

The book of James has at least 20 resolutions that need to be part of the Christian's covenant with God about how the believer is going to employ the tongue and lips, and master the heart in such a way that the beauty of Jesus is expressed:

1. I resolve to ask God for wisdom to speak out of a single-minded devotion to him (1:5).

2. I resolve to boast only in the exultation I receive in Jesus Christ and also in the humiliation I receive for Jesus Christ (1:9-10).

3. I resolve to set a watch over my mouth (1:13).

4. I resolve to be constantly quick to hear and slow to speak (1:19).

5. I resolve to learn the gospel way of speaking to both rich and poor (2:1-4).


6. I resolve to speak in the present consciousness of my final judgment (2:12).

7. I resolve never to stand on anyone's face with the words I employ (2:16).

8. I resolve never to claim as reality in my life what I do not truly experience (3:14).  
 9. I resolve to resist quarrelsome words as evidence of a bad heart that needs to be mortified (4:1).  
 10. I resolve never to speak decided evil against another out of a heart of antagonism (4:11).

180  **Speech in James**

11. I resolve never to boast in any thing but what I will accomplish (4:13).  
 12. I resolve to speak as one subject to the providences of God (4:15).  
 13. I resolve never to grumble. The judge is at the door (5:9).  
 14. I resolve never to allow anything but total integrity in everything I say (5:12).  
 15. I resolve to speak to God in prayer whenever I suffer (5:13).  
 16. I resolve to sing praises to God whenever I'm cheerful (5:14).  
 17. I resolve to ask for the prayers of others when I'm in need (5:14).  
 18. I resolve to confess it whenever I have failed (5:15).  
 19. I resolve to pray with others for one another whenever I am together with them (5:15).  
 20. I resolve to speak words of restoration when I see another wander (5:19).  
 ~Sinclair Ferguson

181  **Money in Proverbs**


1. How to get money.  
 a. Illegitimate gain.  
 (1). Through violence (1:13; 11:16)  
 It leads to destruction for those who do it (1:13, 19). The wise father is warning his son against the temptation of joining the wicked in their violent plans. They see their plot as a path to wealth; wisdom sees it as a path to self-destruction.

182  **Money in Proverbs**

- (2). Does not profit (10:2; ;11:1, 18; 20:17; 21:6; 15:6, 27).  
 •10:2 –This seems almost contradictory; how can treasures not benefit? This is the warning: illicit wealth is deceptive in that it seems to offer great benefit, but in the long run is of no use. This indicates that justice will catch up with the wicked, God in His sovereignty will deal with the wicked. Also, there is a spiritual side to well-being that must be considered. Even if there appears to be benefit, in spiritual reality there is not.  
 •20:17—a graphic picture of momentary pleasure and expectations turned to misery and disaster  
 •15:6, 27—the one who sinfully makes profit finds that his wealth only causes trouble for his family. This is graphically seen in the case of Achan, whose name was used as a play on words for this verb for "trouble," who gained sinfully and destroyed his whole family.

183  **Money in Proverbs**

- (3). Through "vanity"(13:11).  
 • The word translated "fraud" is *hebel*, "vanity." It is contrasted to manual labor (gathering by hand). KD takes it as fraud, describing it as "morally unrestrained fraudulent and deceitful speculation in contrast to solid and real gain." It may be that there is an evil connotation, but it may also be that the contrast is more between that which is the fruit of labor, and therefore truly appreciated for its worth, and that which comes easily - by sweepstake, gambling, speculation, welfare, (inheritance?) etc. That which comes without the pain of labor is not as appreciated and is much more easily spent. This is one of the problems of easy debt, it takes away the sense of the pain of labor by allowing the purchase before the money is ever earned. Putting the "pleasure" of the purchase before the labor makes it easier to spend. The problem is that the "pain" of paying will eventually come, often when the person is in much more deeply than they imagined.

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- Matthew Henry on 13:11  
 This shows that riches wear as they are won and woven. 1. That which is won ill will never wear well, for a curse attends it which will waste it, and the same corrupt dispositions

which incline men to the sinful ways of getting well incline them to the like sinful ways of spending: *Wealth gotten by vanity will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished.*

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(4). Unjust gain should be hated (28:16).

(5). Dishonest business practices (11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23).

The discussion of differing weights comes from the ancient dishonest practice of having two sets of weights. One heavier than normal for purchases—so that they get more than they should, one lighter than normal when selling—so they give less than they should (*Enjoying the Proverbs*, sv. 11:1). See how strongly God cares that we are honest in our business dealings. Dishonesty is an abomination. He sees all of our practices (16:11). Adam Clark worked for a silk merchant that suggested that he stretch the silk when measuring it for a sale. Clark replied, "Your silk may stretch, sir, but my conscience won't. Clark later wrote a Bible commentary. (*Enjoying the Proverbs*, p. 113.) Do we have two standards of reporting our hours - are we late when we arrive at work, but early to leave? Are we careful in claiming every possible tax deduction, but slow to remember every source of income? Are we quick to collect money owed us, but negligent in paying our debts?

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b. Legitimate gain

(1). A result of wisdom (3:16; 8:18, 21; 14:24; 21:20)

One of the many benefits of wisdom is wealth. This is not a guarantee; Proverbs recognizes that wealth is not all-important and not all wise are wealthy. But all things being equal, wisdom will give skill in gaining wealth and keeping it. A wise lifestyle generally is prosperous, a foolish one generally leads to poverty.

(2). A result of diligence (10:4).

Disciplined diligence, not lax easy going half-effort, is the means to prosperity. One's financial condition is seen as primarily influenced by one's effort. This indicates, when taken with the preceding point, that wise living is diligent, purposeful, labor-filled living. Sometimes we get the idea that a wise man just sits in an easy chair and thinks; this verse tells us that wise men do sweat.

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(3). A blessing from the Lord (10:22).

"The sluggard looks for prosperity without diligence; the practical atheist from diligence alone; the sound-hearted Christian from *the blessing of God* in the exercise of diligence. This wise combination keeps him in an active habit; humble, and dependent on God." ... "*He addeth no sorrow with it*; at least no sorrow, but what turns to a blessing. Accumulation of riches may be the accumulation of sorrows.

(Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*, 10:22)

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(4). A result of work (12:11; 13:11; 14:23; 20:13; 28:19)

12:11—Note that it is tilling that leads to bread. Tilling is not the harvest, it is the first step to preparing the soil. Tilling requires foresight. A lazy man may be able to get up the interest to harvest if he is hungry; a diligent man can work even though the "pay off" is delayed.

12:11b—the one who lacks sense always has this great plan for making money, but it is never accomplished. He is always looking for a "new angle" or an easier way to get rich.

Vain plans produce nothing. (cf. 28:19—adds that he will be filled with poverty as a result of vain pursuits.)

13:11b; 14:23—The way to meet your needs and to provide for your family is labor.

20:13—Love of comfort and rest does not promote wealth. It is not easy to make money.

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(5). A result of righteousness (13:21; 15:6).

13:21—*chosen*, wealth, treasure . This is the general principle, again. The Lord delights to bless the righteous.

(6). A result of working a plan (21:5).

This verse stresses that planning leads to success, while rushing ahead without plans leads to disaster. The idea of working is in the diligence. This is not "pie-in-the-sky" dreaming, but the planning of one who will put the plans into action. Cf. 16:3, 9; 19:21; 21:30.

(7). A result of humility and fear of the Lord (22:4).

Again, prosperity is a blessing from the Lord.

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(8). A result of knowledge (24:4).

This is godly knowledge, parallel to wisdom. There is concrete benefit to knowledge of God's Word.

(9). Benefits have byproducts (14:4).

All endeavors will have their negative side effects. One can avoid the unpleasant by-products, but only at the cost of loss of the beneficial ones also. This has applications to every area of life. No job will be 100% enjoyable; there will always be tasks that are an unpleasant part of the work. This verse tells us about the reality of pollution as a result of industry. If a church grows it will experience problems dealing with more needs, increasingly complex organization, etc. The joys of owning a car also bring the headaches of repairs (parents, don't rob your children of the education in this principle by always "fixing" their problems while they enjoy the benefits). Note that gain is not evil! Cf. 31:18.

191  **Money in Proverbs**

2. The value of money

a. Wisdom is better (3:13-16; 8:10-11, 17-19; 16:16; 28:11).

The first three passages (Chapters 3, 8 and 16) indicate that wisdom and understanding are to be preferred to wealth. Partially this may be explained by the simple fact that wisdom is a source of wealth - better to have the source than the product. E.g., better to have an oil well than a truck full of oil. But more importantly, and more to the point in these passages, wisdom is of greater value than money. By wisdom we can acquire things not available at any price—e.g. happiness, a stable family, health, a vital relationship with the Lord (though is the source of wisdom), etc.

28:11 appears to be an illustration of the superiority of wisdom to wealth. A wealthy fool can be deluded by the arrogance that often comes with money - he can think that he is wise.

But the poor person who is truly wise has a clear perception of life and people. The verb "sees through" in NASB (*chaqar* חָקַר) is to search, examine thoroughly ("so as to expose weakness" - Job 29:16; Pr. 18:17). Better to have understanding and insight than be a rich fool. The contrast is especially striking in that the rich fool doesn't even know himself, while wisdom gives the ability to understand someone else.

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b. Honor is better (11:16; 22:1).

11:16 - There is an implied contrast in the value of the acquisitions.

22:1 tells us that a name (i.e. a good reputation) is better than great riches. This is not to mean fame or popularity, but a reputation that is honorable. Such a reputation is the fruit of character. Greater than wealth is a reputation as a man or woman of God. Is that what we teach our children? More precious than any earthly possession or position is character? Do we exalt character above looks, above profession, above status (i.e. education at the "right" school, membership in the "right" clubs or organizations)?

193  **Money in Proverbs**

c. The fear of the Lord is better (15:16).

"Turmoil" (*mehumah*) is "tumult, confusion, turmoil, disquietude." It is derived from a root that has the idea of *to murmur, roar, defeat in battle*; this suggests the noisy, boisterous, conflict-filled, peace-less home. The contrast suggests that the fear of the Lord is the answer for such problems; the Lord gives peace and quiet—of heart. This verse helps us to decide for what we should strive. It also helps us to be content with what we do have, recognizing that many of the prosperous have lives that are full of turmoil and ultimate condemnation. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:6. The word for turmoil is especially used of the turmoil that is the result of divine wrath. This verse, then, should especially be read in light of eternity. Even if the rich person has no apparent turmoil in this life, without a relationship with Jesus Christ they face eternal turmoil.


194  **Money in Proverbs**

d. Love is better (15:17).

Love is better than abundance. The contrast is put in the terms of a meal. Better the simplest (only vegetables), the best (a rich meat) if there is no love with the best. This helps us to see what it is for which we should strive, not to provide all the best, but to have a home of love. Fathers, this may help you decide what job to take and how much time to give to your work. Families, what does this say about the decision of having the mother work outside the home? Her income may improve what material blessings you have, but what will it do to the atmosphere of your home?

e. Peace is better (17:1).

Quietness (*Shalvah*) — peace, security, free from worry ("careless security"). In this proverb the contrast is with *rib*—strife, argument, contention. Better to have the meagerest possible meal with peace in the home than a banquet filled with the best of meats (*zibche* suggests slaughtered animals from peace offerings—a religious feast). How many homes have the most lavish of holiday (religious feast) meals but have terrible strife.

195  **Money in Proverbs**

f. Integrity is better (19:1, 22; 28:6)

19:1 - This proverb suggests that the perverse fool may also be rich. It is better to have character/integrity than money. Unfortunately, for many in our day, even professing Christians, integrity does not have such a high value. Better to tarnish our integrity a little and "get ahead."

g. A good wife is better (19:14; 31:10-31)

19:14 - Prudent (*Maskalet*) have insight, comprehension. A godly mate is better than money. Cf. Ecc. 9:9. How often men will sacrifice their marriage "to get ahead." Better to have a good marriage. By the way, note that it is her character, not looks, that make her better than money. Young people need to look for character in a future mate. When you describe someone of the opposite sex as desirable, is it because of their character and wisdom? Parents, is that what we praise in others?

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h. It doesn't make us a better person (22:2).

We are all humble creatures, responsible to a sovereign God. We are all sinners, in need of salvation. We are all objects of God's love. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Money does not make a person better (or worse).

i. It is only temporary (23:4-5).

Don't make wealth a lifetime pursuit, it has a tendency to sprout wings and take off before your eyes. Money is too temporary and untrustworthy to invest our life energy to acquire it. How many have given their lives to some endeavor only to see it vanish in a changing business environment. (*yga'* to toil, grow weary).

197  **Money in Proverbs**



j. It should be kept in balance (30:7-9).

The two requests the king has for this life is that he have a godly character and that he be given moderation in possessions. Either extreme can be a temptation. Wealth can cause lack of dependence (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17) on God; poverty can cause disobedience (also lack of dependence!!) and bitterness.

198  **Money in Proverbs**

3. What to do with money.

a. Honor the Lord (3:9-10; 20:25).

3:9-10 — to "honor (*kabed*) the Lord" in this context seems to be primarily intending giving gifts from that which the Lord has given. This is seen in the second half of the verse which suggests the first fruit offering (though the language is general enough to allow for more) (cf. "first day of every week" for NT giving, 1 Cor. 16:2). The generality of the expression is probably intentional to speak of the totality of our stewardship. We are to give to the Lord, but we are also to use the money in ways that honor Him (as the rest of this section of the outline will teach). We should not use our money in wasteful ways, or spend or give it in ungodly ways. 3:10 is another of those general principles— such God-honoring use of our money leads to wealth, to "reward" us and to entrust money into faithful hands. The spiritual application of 3:10, heavenly reward, is an absolute (Mt. 6:19-21).

20:25— gives a needed warning about an overly zealous response to the first verses. If we make a commitment to the Lord we must do it thoughtfully and then follow through with it. Cf. Ecc. 5:4-5 - better not to give at all. This is a word to churches that push for emotional pledges. Better to encourage careful thought and committed action. By the way; if this is true of financial commitments, how much more marital!!!

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b. Fulfill your obligations (3:27-28)

3:27-28 - 27a. lit. is "Do not withhold good from its owner." "Good" (*tov*) is the general word good thing, benefit, welfare. This could apply to the wages due an employee (cf. Lev. 19:13b; Dt. 24:14-15). It may also apply to a debt that is owed. Do not delay payment of your debts. Note that there is a provision made for the inability to pay. But this would be a strongly worded condition - one must be totally unable to pay the bill. This assumes a catastrophe, otherwise one should never have made the obligation. To make an obligation knowing one is unable to fulfill it is theft! Certainly, one must not use his resources for other purposes when he has outstanding debts.

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c. Enjoy security (10:15; 18:10-11)

10:15 - money gives security. It enables us to avoid catastrophe by buying quality, eating well, making needed repairs. It enables us to meet catastrophes by having the resources to fix problems (e.g. money to pay medical bills, etc.). Note, this explains why the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

18:10-11 give balance to 10:15. Yes, money does provide security, but it should not be our trust, hope and security. We should trust in the Lord. Those who trust only in wealth are in a very dangerous position (Cf. 11:28; 1 Tim. 6:17).

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d. Leave an inheritance (13:22).

13:22— It seems that the contrast in this verse is the lasting impact of wealth for the good man as opposed to the futility of wealth in the hands of the sinner (since it goes to the righteous, who deserve it, not those of his choosing or family). The good man has enough wealth that it will filter down to his grandchildren. Whether this means he directly leaves some to them, or whether its abundance means that there will plenty left to even the next generation is unclear. I am inclined to the latter, especially with the contrast of the second

half of the verse indicating there is more than the individuals actions involved (i.e. the blessing or cursing of God seems to accomplish the end results). Another factor is the possibility that the godly man influences his children in a way that they will be wise stewards of the inheritance they receive.

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e. Help the poor (14:21; 14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; 28:27; 31:20)

1. Terminology.

*Dal* (14:31; 19:17; 21:13; 22:22a, 9; 29:7).

The root verb has the idea of to hang, be low or languish. The noun means to be low, weak, poor, thin.

*Rash* (28:27; 17:5; 29:13).

The verb means to in want or hunger, poor. It is interesting to note that this is the term in 6:11; 10:4; 20:13, where it is the result of slack work habits. Could this indicate merciful help toward those who are hungry even due to their own fault?? Only one verse, 28:27, says to give to them.

*Ani* (14:21; 22:22b; 31:20a).


The root verb means to be bowed down, afflicted. Therefore the noun means poor, afflicted, humble, meek.

*Ebyon* (14:31; 31:20b).

The verb means to be willing, consent. The noun means to be in want, needy, poor.

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What these terms indicate is that the poor in view in these passages are generally not the lazy poor that are able to care for themselves. These are those who have been impoverished by circumstances beyond their abilities to cope (e.g. death of the husband/father, disease, disaster, etc.). For those able to work, the answer is 16:26. Cf. 2 Thes. 3:10.

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2. The specifics.

14:21 - To be gracious to the poor brings blessing (*ashre*, cf. Ps. 1:1). 14:31 - To oppress the poor is to reproach the God who made Him. In Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9 man's creation in the image of God is the basis for our kindness (or lack of cursing/murder) to him. The poor may not be able to defend himself, but God can! To be gracious to the poor is to honor God. 19:17 - A gift to the poor is a loan to God, God will repay it. 21:13 - As previous verses show that God will repay our kindness, He will also repay our coldness.

22:9 - Lit. to be generous is to have a good eye. God will bless those who share their food with the poor.

28:27 - God will provide for those who provide for others. 31:20 - The godly woman is generous to the needy.

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f. Keep it by maintenance (27:23-28).

This passage pictures the unique blessing of pastoral life in that it contrasts it to other forms of wealth (e.g. commerce and position) and shows that pastoral life is a self-sufficient, lasting wealth. The key, for our purposes, is the first verse. One cannot take this life for granted. Its benefits are at the cost of diligence. One must know what is going on and keep a close eye on one's business affairs to maintain wealth.

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g. Enjoy it when it is from God (10:22).

The blessing of the Lord in wealth is not like the ill-gotten wealth that brings calamity. The blessed may experience troubles, but it is not inherent in the wealth given by God.

h. Save it for the future (6:6-8; 21:20; 30:25; Cf. 11:26).

6:6-9 (30:25) - the ant shames us by her example as she stores away for the future. God provides for their future need by guiding them to save. Learn from His pattern in nature!

21:20 - The difference between the fool and the wise in this verse is not amount of wealth, but consumption practices. The fool devours what he has (he squanders his wealth); the wise saves and enjoys.

207  **Money in Proverbs**

i. Be generous (11:24-25).

"Scatter" is used parallel to giving to the poor in Ps. 112:9. This proverb teaches that generosity leads not to having less, but more. The cause is not explained. Certainly, the blessing of God is in view. This is not to teach irresponsible squandering, but it also teaches against selfish miserliness, etc. Godly, gracious generosity is good and will be blessed. This is contrary to human wisdom which says we are to look out for "number one." Godly wisdom (which is based on the fear of the Lord) realizes that God blesses us when we do what is right; we are to obey, which includes gracious generosity, and trust the Lord. Again, this is not to be taken as a license for irresponsibility, but a balance to overly "practical" financial strategies that exclude kindness.

208  **Money in Proverbs**

4. How to lack money.

a. Immorality (5:9-10; 6:26; 29:3).

Immorality leads to loss of health and wealth. This can be from many causes—lots of spending in the process of immorality (e.g. the prodigal son), etc. The basic idea seems to be that immorality leads to decline—spiritually, morally, financially, in every way.

b. Laziness (6:10-11; 10:4; 20:13).

Laziness leads to poverty in these verses because it does not prepare for the future and, by neglect, destroys what it has.

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c. Penalty for theft (6:31).

The primary point is that theft can lead to loss due to restitution. By the way, that is a weakness in our present system. If someone steals, they are imprisoned and cost the system. In the OT, they would make multiple restitution or become forced labor until they worked off their debt.

d. Get it by "vanity" (13:11).

The contrast is to gain by labor. If you worked for it you are much more likely to value it and not waste it. Those who gain a quick inheritance or gambling wealth often lose it as quickly.

210  **Money in Proverbs**

e. Neglect discipline (13:18).

Keil and Delitzsch explains that the fool makes errors in judgment and is offered counsel/reproof to correct him. He rejects the counsel and continues on the path to poverty. How often I have seen those deeply troubled, but refusing to accept the direction of Scripture; they want commiseration, not correction. Often that is the counseling of the lost, but it is not biblical counsel.

f. Talk (14:23; cf. 28:19).

The contrast is between toil (*etseb* - hard work, e.g. Gen. 3:17) and talk. This is not to deny the value of talking over plans, but there are those who only talk, and it gets them nowhere. Beware of those who offer only words; action is necessary for results.

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g. Haste (21:5).

Note that the contrasted results are the same as in the previous point (14:23). Planning leads to abundance, success. Haste makes waste and failure. Take time to plan out actions, etc. Planning anticipates needs, problems, etc. Haste causes emergencies (requiring expensive solutions), mistakes and accidents.

h. Oppress the poor or give only to the rich (22:16).

Human wisdom says that we should take advantage of the weak/poor and seek the favor of the wealthy with gifts. God has a different plan. His blessing is on those who give to the

poor and don't oppress anyone.

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i. Pursuit of pleasure and luxury (21:17; 21:20; 23:21).

The word for "pleasure" is "joy" (*simchah*). The person who loves pleasure, entertainment, parties, etc. consumes rather than saves. His tastes will exceed his budget. The key here is "love." Joy is not evil of itself, but when our goal is joy, we are on the path of self-seeking. Cf. 21:15 where joy is an appropriate product of godly values and pursuits. This verse is certainly true to my observations. I have been in the homes of those claiming poverty, and yet seen them filled with gadgets (video games, expensive electronics, etc.) and other items that are hardly necessities. How often it is that the poor have wasted their time and money on entertainment. Think of how many nice cars and nice clothing one sees in poor neighborhoods. How often have you seen someone use "food stamps" in the line in front of you, and yet they will be buying soft drinks, candy, etc.?

213  **Money in Proverbs**

5. The danger of money.

a. It does not help in the day of judgment (11:4).

Cf. Zeph. 1:18 - money and wealth cannot deliver in the day of God's wrath. Wealth, social status, education, etc. will not have any bearing on our judgment. The only issue will be sin and righteousness. For us to have eternal fellowship with a holy God we must be righteous. Such a demand can only be met by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. But is that the righteousness and life in view in this verse? BKC says it is the longevity that comes with godly character. Either there are two different issues in the mind of the author - final judgment and present life, or the righteousness must be imputed, not experiential. Kidner argues (in one of the introductory essays) that life in Proverbs does not have the eternal perspective, "life after death lies beyond the horizon of Proverbs." (p. 56). If this is true, then there are, indeed, two perspectives in this verse.

214  **Money in Proverbs**

b. It can be a false place of trust (11:28).

If you trust in wealth you will eventually fall. It is like walking out on thin ice. Appearances can deceive. Our trust should be in the Lord.

215  **Money in Proverbs**

c. Too much can cause loss of enjoyment (27:7).

A honeycomb is normally highly valued. One who has an abundance (of food, possessions, etc.) does not value them as highly. One who has little prizes what little he has. We, as Americans are so used to abundance that we do not appreciate the many blessings that we have. Think of parts of the world where children die for lack of pennies worth of medicine. Think of the many in the world that live in homes made of discarded cardboard. Spiritually, think of many Christians across the world whose only Bible is what they could copy by hand from someone else's hand-copy. Lack of wealth helps us to deeply appreciate whatever we do have. Parents, when you give too much to your child, they lose the ability to appreciate what they have. Value is almost always a product of relative rarity.

216  **Money in Proverbs**

d. Wealth can hurt character (18:23).

While the poor will plead for mercy, the rich will answer harshly. Wealth can build pride that leads to harshness, unkindness, and lack of mercy.

e. Wealth can lead to pride (28:11).

This verse shows a contrast between perception and reality. The rich man thinks that he is wise—he is self-important and self-impressed because of his wealth. In reality, it may be that a poor man has much more insight.

217  **Money in Proverbs**

f. It can lead to threats (13:8).

The poor man does not have to fear being kidnapped for a ransom. The rich man becomes a

target. Not many cardboard shacks have security systems. "The rich man may spend his fortune meeting his commitments (cf. Ec. 5:11) and avoiding fears to which a poor man offers too small a target." [Kidner, *Proverbs*] Ecc. 5:11 reminds us that the more we things we possess, the more things will possess us. The rich man has much more to protect, much more to lose. The poor man enjoys a life without many of the worries that fill a rich man's anxieties. The poor man is not overly consumed with diversifying his long term investments and protecting assets from inflation and taxes. The poor man is more simply concerned with making enough to live.

218  **Money in Proverbs**

g. Shallow friendships (14:20; 19:4, 7).

We have studied this under friendship in Proverbs. The many friends of the rich are not true friends; they "love" him for what they can get from him (gifts, status, etc.).

219  **Money in Proverbs**

7. Debt.

a. Is slavery (22:7; cf. Mt. 6:24).

Debt causes loss of freedom. In the OT Law this was literally true since the debtor would become slave to the creditor if he could not pay the debt. One in debt is not free to use his income as he will, or to take less income—he must pay his debt. The creditor takes priority and sets the values and priorities of the one in debt. I have seen numerous articles speaking of the problem of debt and inability to serve as a missionary, go to seminary, take a particular job or ministry—the debtor has lost his freedom to serve the Lord. I have also seen many references to the Christian's inability to give to the Lord's work because of debt. Debt puts our future time, effort and resources at the service of someone else. (Cf. James 4:13-16)

Jesus wisely taught that it is only possible to serve one master. If you have two masters, you will not be totally free to serve them both, eventually one's demands will conflict with the other. By the way, think what this would do for a friendship - when you make a friend your slave you take a high risk of losing that friend (and your money). The humility of such servanthood should only be taken for survival, as it was in the OT.

220 

"Some sell their liberty  
to gratify their luxury."

*Matthew Henry, Proverbs 22:8*

221  **Money in Proverbs**

b. Is a form of oppression (28:8).

This verse reflects the fact that in OT times it was the poor who borrowed—to survive; not the rich to speculate. In the Law, it was forbidden for an Israelite to demand interest from a fellow Israelite, though he could require it from a foreigner (Dt. 23:19-20). Here the context indicates that the oppressor is apparently exacting interest from "family" or, perhaps, at extremely high rates. The evil, then, is not requiring interest as much as it is lack of compassion on the poor and making personal wealth at the expense of the poor.

222  **Money in Proverbs**

c. Surety.

1. Definition.

Interestingly, in Ps. 119:122 God is asked to be surety for us. Surety means guaranteeing to pay a debt if the borrower can not or will not pay. It is the equivalent of our modern cosigning of a note. The difficulty is that it puts the one who becomes surety at the mercy of the borrower. His misfortune, laziness or foolishness will cost the guarantor. The basic idea of Proverbs is to give or loan the money yourself; if you can't afford to do either, then you cannot afford to become surety.

Albert Barnes on Psalm 119:122 has this comment on "surety" :

The word means, properly, "to mix, to mingle;" hence, to braid, to interweave; then, to

exchange, to barter. Then it means to mix or intermingle interests; to unite ourselves with others so that their interests come to be our own; and hence, to take one under our protection, to become answerable for, to be a surety for: as, when one endorses a note for another, he mingles his own interest, reputation, and means with his.

This gives a good thought on surety. It is mingling our reputation and resources with the dealings of another. It is a form of bondage.

223  **Money in Proverbs**

2. Attitude.

(a). Hate it (11:15).

Surety puts one at risk. It leads to calamity for the one who does it. The Hebrew construction is emphatic on the certainty of the pain. The one who hates such a practice (and therefore avoids it) will avoid the bitter consequences. (b). It is foolish (17:18). The person who will expose himself to such risk lacks sense.

3. Action.

(a). Don't do it (22:26-27).

If you can't afford to make the loan (or simply give the money) yourself, do it. Otherwise, don't take the risk of your losing all that you have because of someone else's poverty.

224  **Money in Proverbs**

(b). Get out of it (6:1-5)!

Notice that the borrower is a neighbor or stranger. No matter who the person, friend or stranger, the principle applies, don't cosign. If you were foolish enough to do so, make every possible effort to get out of it! The language in these verses is very strong. The one to whom the appeal is made is the borrower, not the creditor; he is the only one who can pay the debt or make other arrangements.

(c). Take collateral (20:16; 27:13; cf. Ex. 22:25-27; Amos 2:8).

If someone is foolish enough to cosign for a stranger, don't you be at loss, take collateral from the cosigner, the one guaranteeing the note. As Kidner comments on 20:16, "he is a bad risk!" Note, since the person in question is not an Israelite, the laws of lending allow for interest, etc.

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d. Other considerations.

(1). Debt is presuming upon the future (27:1; James 4:13-15).

Debt is making a commitment to pay from funds that are not now available, but are assumed will be available in the future. But that presumes on health, continued employment, etc. Debt presumes on the future and commits it. It closes the door on some possibilities, since now one will be required to make enough money to make the payments. God rebukes those who presume on the future (and on God!). What, then, does He say when we assume we will be able to repay what we have borrowed?

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(2). Debt is often an indication of haste (cf. 21:5).

Debt is often a result of wanting something now, and not having the patience or self-control to wait and save. In the OT it was allowable to borrow to survive, but not to merely enjoy now at the expense of the future. We are doing this as families and as a nation - we mortgage the income of the future so that we can live beyond our means now. It puts us into a continuing cycle; the loss of the already committed funds "forces" us to keep borrowing to maintain our standard of living and continue to enjoy now.

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(3). Debt is often a human strategy to get what the Lord does not want us to have or does not want us to have yet (cf. 14:12; cf. 2 Chron. 16:9a).

Often debt is the answer of human wisdom to a perceived need or want. God's answer may be that we don't need it (merchants know that credit cards greatly increase our spending),

this is not His timing for it, this is not the way He wants to provide (He may want to supply the need through unexpected income, Christian generosity, removal of the need, etc.).

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(4). Not paying a debt is wicked (Ps. 15:4; 37:21; Mt. 5:37; Rom. 13:8).

A Christian is in direct disobedience to God if he does not pay his debt. Many are quick to get into debt knowing that our present laws make it easy to walk away from the debt and that there is little or no shame in it. For the Christian it is considered theft and lying to not pay what is promised.