

Proverbs

Understandable Instructions for Young Men

JLS Paraphrase

Jerry L. Simms

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Greenville, South Carolina USA

Send comments to Proverbsguy@gmail.com

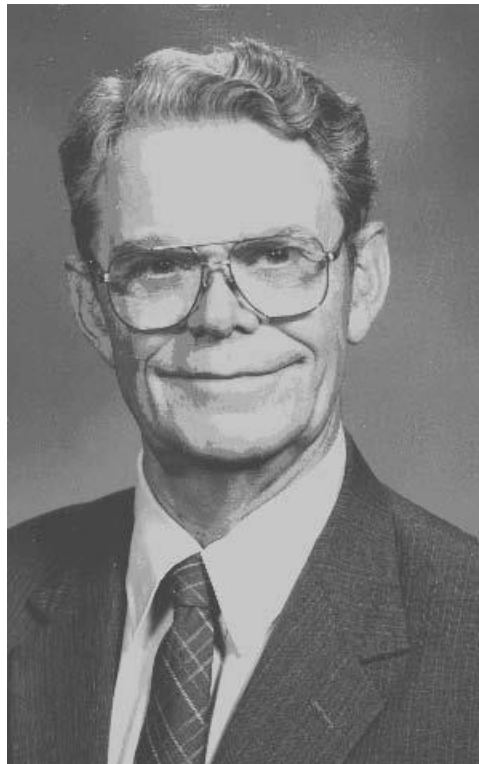
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Acknowledgements

I wish to extend a hearty thank you to my wife, Donna, for her patience during the nearly 15,000 hours of study and meditation that went into this work. Without her support and encouragement, this book would never have become reality.

The late Pastor Fred Barber is the one to whom I am most grateful. Many years ago a godly retired pastor encouraged me to abandon the concentrated study of Proverbs and broaden my knowledge base by studying the whole Bible. I appreciated his good advice, but I felt sure the LORD had something different in mind for me. A week or so after that event, Pastor Barber told me that he had overheard the other pastor. Pastor Barber's words of encouragement to me were, "Bologna! Keep studying Proverbs." Now, because of his encouragement, you can read Proverbs: Understandable Instructions for Young Men.



Pastor Fred Barber

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To my son Gregory,

I am so glad that you are my son. Out of the entire world, I could not have chosen anyone better than you to be a part of our family. I love you, son. Solomon had such a strong desire for his son to be wise, and I have the same desire for you. You have a tender heart, and the LORD is to be praised for that. I am writing this book as a love letter to you with the confidence that as you utilize its truths, it will make your tender heart a wise, tender heart. My desire for you is that you will come to know the LORD Jesus Christ in such a close, personal, friendship manner that everyone will be able to see your love for Him, strength of character, and wisdom. It will happen as you practice Proverbs every day. I pray for you, son, and as the LORD permits, I will be there to help, encourage, and support you as you grow in the LORD. Then, when I am gone to be with the LORD, you can look back at this letter of love as a constant reminder of my gratefulness for being allowed to love you. You are one of my best friends, and I love you for who you are.

This book is not intended to be a stand-alone work. It is intended to help you understand the pages of Scriptures. Read this book often, and make it yours in practice and in the desire of your heart. It will guide you through many difficult and trying times that likely lay ahead. Remember, though, that this is not easy reading. It will take time to learn and digest its truths, but when you finally understand, you will be a young man who is much more able to handle the hard knocks of life. Give the LORD ample chances to teach you, and He will teach you well.

With my love,

Dad

Introduction

Many people will say that Proverbs is their favorite book of the Bible and that they try to read one chapter a day each month. They are blessed by the helpful teachings found there, but if the truth were really known, most of them are being blessed in spite of the fact that they do not really understand what Solomon was conveying in many of the verses. I was one of those people for a long time, but through years of serious study and meditation, the LORD has shown me what many of the verses are really saying rather than what I had assumed they were saying. Proverbs 1:6 mentions that some of the verses are “dark sayings” (KJV), and it takes time to understand them. Grasping these verses is much like walking into a dark room. It takes time for your eyes to adjust to the dim light. In the same way, it takes time for your spiritual eyes to see these dark sayings. It is interesting to note that the ones that were particularly difficult to understand have become some of the sweetest verses to me now.

Proverbs was written by a man to men. Of the first nine chapters, almost a full one-third of the verses deal with sexual attitudes and actions of men. Women can benefit a great deal from the things taught in a majority of the verses in Proverbs, and they can learn much about the basic needs and desires of men by studying the verses on sex. Chapter 5 gives wives valuable information on how to help their husbands experience victory over all temptations to commit adultery.

The emphasis of Proverbs is not the same as that of Psalms. The primary goal of Psalms is a vertical relationship in that it emphasizes your relationship with the LORD. The primary goal of Proverbs is a horizontal relationship in that it emphasizes your relationship with your neighbor based upon your relationship with the LORD. In Proverbs, Solomon tried to teach his son to acquire and maintain a personal, intimate relationship with the LORD. The New Testament clarifies this relationship. According to John 14:6, the only way to have an intimate, personal relationship with God is to put your faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. He died there to pay the penalty for every sin you have ever committed, and He offers eternal life and forgiveness of sins as a gift to all who will receive Him (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Receiving Christ as Savior (see John 1:12) is what the Bible calls being “born again” (see John 3:3). No man will enter heaven without accepting Christ. When you ask Him to come into your life to be your personal Savior, your inner desires will change from opposing God to loving Him, and this love will enable you to do all the things Solomon teaches. The apostle Paul summed it up very well in Philippians 4:13 where he wrote ***“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*** (KJV) Proverbs assumes that you already have this kind of relationship with Jesus Christ. So, as you read Proverbs and this paraphrase, keep in mind that the goal of this book is to aid you in expressing your love for the LORD by doing good to your neighbor and expressing your fear of the LORD by turning away from every sinful practice.

This paraphrase started as a personal Bible study. Initially I did not expect to do more than try to learn the book, but the more I got into it, the more it seemed reasonable to paraphrase the book. This study has included almost 15,000 hours of study and meditation during the past twenty-seven years, and they have been some of the most precious years of my life. The more I studied and meditated upon Proverbs the more it has virtually come alive. I have told my son, Gregory, many times that ***“I have made Proverbs my home, and Proverbs has made its home in my heart.”*** This paraphrase is an expression of a heart that is full and running over with the truths and blessings of Proverbs and is a by-product of writing a full commentary on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

This paraphrase was written in order to make the teachings of Proverbs so clear that any believer can understand them. The difficulty in paraphrasing Proverbs was not in deciding what to include in the wording but what to leave out so that you, as the reader, are not left to wonder how the wording of a particular verse came to be stated as it is. Prov. 26:12 is a good example of this. It states, ***“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*** Years ago, I would have read this verse and said a quiet amen while going on to the next verse. I was blessed by it, but I really did not understand what the verse was saying. In attempting to paraphrase this verse, the first question that came to mind was, “Hope of what?” There is a hope for the fool, and there is a hope for the man who is wise in his own eyes, but what is that hope? The basic problem with a fool is that he is much more concerned about speaking his opinion on any matter than he is about listening to what a wise man can teach him. Therefore, the hope for him is that he would become wise. The basic problem with a man who is wise in his own eyes is that he is proud. Therefore, the hope for him is that he would become humble. With these thoughts in mind, the verse has been paraphrased as ***“Have you ever seen a man who perceives himself as being extremely wise? There is more hope that a fool will become wise than***

that this man will become humble.” Actually, I would have preferred to write that there is no hope for a proud man to become humble since there is no hope of a fool to become wise. Prov. 27:22 states, **“Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.”** Therefore, Prov. 26:12 could have been paraphrased as **“Have you ever seen a man who perceives himself as being extremely wise? Since there is virtually no hope of a fool becoming wise, there is even less hope of this man becoming humble.”** This wording would have been inconsistent with what Prov. 26:12 is saying, so more accurate wording was chosen. Hopefully, this will give you some appreciation of how the wording of these verses evolved in this paraphrase.

The JLS Paraphrase was never intended to be a stand-alone reference. It should be used as an aid that will help you better understand the Scriptures themselves. The Bible is the main resource, so study it and use this reference to clarify the verses in Proverbs. Be diligent in your study, and learn to meditate upon what you study. The truths of Scripture normally do not come to light quickly, but they will surface in time. It took thirteen years to understand some of the paragraphs in Proverbs, but it was so sweet when they finally made sense.

Studying the Bible is much like being a prospector for gold (see Proverbs 2:1-4). The prospector goes into the mountains and will not return until he has found the mother lode. The Scriptures are your mountain in which the gold of the Word of God resides. It is certain that the gold is there, but you must dig for it. As you dig, a few nuggets of golden truths will be found from time to time, and as you keep digging in the same place, you will find more nuggets. In time, the mother lode of truth will make itself evident, and it will change your life. The Bible, in a sense, is like a mountain that is unique for each person even though it is the same Bible for everyone. You dig in your mountain while I dig in mine. I say this because you cannot learn as much from my study of the Word as I do, and I cannot learn as much from your study of the Word as you do. So, dig in your mountain of the Word of God and continue doing it for life. Take as long as is necessary to acquire the truths hidden there, and as you do, the LORD will make Himself known to you and will change your life. It is my prayer that through the use of this paraphrase, you will come to understand more fully the truths Solomon taught in Proverbs and that your trust in the LORD will grow and mature.

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The Proper Method of Learning the Book

¹ Solomon was the son of David and the second king of Israel. The following verses are proverbs that he recorded so that you can learn them and gain wisdom. He taught that there are four steps to learning and living the book of Proverbs. They are:

- 1) Step one → ² Study a verse or passage until you “know” it well enough to perform it accurately.
- 2) Step two → Meditate upon a verse or passage until you “discern” (perceive or figure out) why each verse was given and what God wants to accomplish in and through you as you obey them.
- 3) Step three → ³ Once you have learned what a verse or passage says and what it means, “receive” it into your life by living it every day for the rest of your life. This is where you will experience the benefits that come from obeying. Living these truths will teach you how to conduct yourself in a wise manner, how to do good to everyone, how to treat others with fairness, and how to deal with others without bias or favoritism.
- 4) Step four → ⁴ Once you have learned the blessings that come from obeying the teachings of Proverbs, “give” it to people who need it by teaching them the previous three steps that you learned. There are two types of people you should seek to help. The first is **the naive man**. He seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices, so teach him how to carefully consider the consequences of each decision in life. That way he will be prepared to make good decisions that will produce good and beneficial results. The second type you should help is **the youth**. Teach them how to gain trustworthy knowledge and how to know Jesus Christ as personal savior from sin. Since knowledge by itself is not always productive, teach them how to look at a problem or opportunity and see it for what it really is and not what it appears to be at a casual glance. Then teach them good decision-making skills so that they too will be well-equipped to make good choices that will produce good results.

⁵ When a wise man hears wisdom being spoken he is always ready to listen in order to gain more understanding knowing that it will serve him well in the future. Then too, a man who possesses sound understanding will seek the advice of wise and godly counselors before making a decision of consequence. ⁶ A wise man and a man of understanding will do these things in order to gain an accurate understanding of what each proverb means, including those that carry a hidden meaning, those that wise men share, and those that are especially difficult to comprehend. If you wish, you too can become a wise and understanding man.

The Fear of the LORD – Essential for Learning

⁷ A genuine, biblical fear of the LORD is the foundation upon which trustworthy knowledge is gained and is expressed in two ways. First, it is a strong conviction that drives a man to do good in order to please his heavenly Father. Second, it drives him to avoid or abandon ever sinful practice so that his fellowship with the LORD is not broken. When you acquire and maintain this kind of attitude in your heart, you will start learning the kind of knowledge that results in real wisdom. On the other hand, a fool lives according to perverted morals, makes light of the whole idea of sin and those who try to avoid it, and insists that there is no God for him. With this kind of attitude in his heart the fool will never learn the kind of knowledge that results in wisdom because the fear of the LORD is the basis upon which trustworthy knowledge is acquired.

Avoid Evil Companions – Choose Good Ones in their place

⁸ Son, I am your father, so listen carefully to what I am about to teach you, and do not reject what your mother has already taught you. ⁹ Without doubt, our teaching will be as a lovely crown of blessing upon your head and as a beautiful chain of wisdom around your neck.

¹⁰ Son, if sinners use enticing words in an attempt to coax you into participating in their sinful activities by promising financial gain or physical pleasures, do not succumb to peer pressure or encourage them by telling them that you approve of their sin. ¹¹ They may say something like this to try to convince you:

"Come join us because we have a good thing going. We will set up an ambush for some innocent guy who is totally unaware of our trap, and then we will kill him. ¹² We will overpower him before he even knows what has happened, and he will die like all those other people we have sent to the grave. ¹³ We will find all kinds of valuable treasures, and we will end up with large bank accounts. ¹⁴ What do you say, will you go with us? We will even give you an equal share of the take."

¹⁵ My son, when these wicked people try to enlist you, do not go with them or be anywhere in the vicinity when they do their evil deeds. ¹⁶ Stay away because they are always running from one evil deed to another, and they won't hesitate to kill someone if that's what it takes to get what they want. ¹⁷ Do not associate with them because they are setting a trap for themselves without even knowing it. It is stupid to set a trap when the animal you hope to catch is watching you set the trap, ¹⁸ but these evil men are just as stupid. They think they are waiting to shed another man's blood, but in reality they are waiting to shed their own. In the end, a trap similar to what they set for others will catch them and take their own lives. ¹⁹ Every greedy person who gains wealth by physical abuse or murder follows the same downward path, and sooner or later it will cost him his life.

The Loss by Those Who Reject Wisdom

²⁰ Wisdom is constantly shouting her invitation in the middle of the busiest streets, and she is yelling as loudly as she can in the most crowded malls. ²¹ She goes to all the places where people are most likely to be, and there she says,

²² "You who are naïve and seldom consider the consequences of your choices in life, how long will you be satisfied with being simple people? And you who scoff at God and His Word, how long will you boast in your opposition to God? And you fools, how long will you despise knowledge in favor of speaking your own opinion on every subject?"

²³ You who really want to be wise, consider my rebuke. Change your mind, accept my wisdom, and follow my instructions. If you do, I promise to give you the spirit of power that will enable you to live right, and I will give you the spirit of knowledge that will teach you how to live right.

²⁴ This is what wisdom says to those who refuse to choose her:

"I called to you, but you told me to get lost. I reached out my hands in a gesture of friendship and concern, but you wouldn't even look my way. ²⁵ You didn't pay attention to any of the words I used when I tried to counsel you, and you didn't want any part of what I had to say when I tried to correct you for your own good. ²⁶ Since you rejected and spurned me, I will stand back and laugh when hurts, heartaches, and losses overwhelm you. ²⁷ When fear comes over you like a hurricane and disasters surround you like a tornado, when you are ready to give up because your inner turmoil is so great, I will still be laughing at your stupidity. ²⁸ When it gets so bad that you finally pray to me for help, I will only mock you. When you get to the point that you fear you will die, then you will seek me in every way you know how. Don't waste your time, though, because I will not let you find me. ²⁹ The reason I will not answer you is because you hated the knowledge I tried to offer you, and you wanted nothing to do with the fear of the LORD since it meant giving

up your sinful pleasures. ³⁰ You didn't want any part of the words I shared with you about me, and when I tried to correct you, you forcefully pushed me away like you would push away a man with leprosy. ³¹ Since you sowed rebellion by rejecting me, you will have to live with the mess you have made of your life. You will have no choice but to be satisfied with the hurts, heartaches and losses your sin will produce for you. ³² It makes no difference whether the naive man's lack of concern about the consequences of his choices in life brings about his premature death or whether the fool's contentment with doing whatever seems good at the moment destroys him. In either case, they will die.

³³ Son, this is a tragic end, but it doesn't have to happen to you. If you will repent when wisdom speaks to you and do what she says, you will find genuine, lasting security in life. You will also experience the peace of mind that will give you the faith and courage to face whatever evil may come your way in the future."

Proverbs Chapter 2

The Gain by Those Who Pursue Wisdom

The Method of Seeking

¹ My son, there are three essential aspects of an effective search for wisdom. All three begin with "IF." My question to you is, "Will you do them?"

The first "IF" is a passive search for wisdom. You don't do any work in this search. You merely need to be willing to accept wisdom when she presents herself to you, consider the Scriptures a valued treasure, ² look forward to each time you see or hear wisdom, and determine that you will make understanding such a part of who you are that you literally hide it in your heart.

³ The second "IF" is an active search for wisdom. This one involves work. Here you must go beyond simply listening, and engage in a personal quest for wisdom. This will require that you study your Bible, listen to good teaching and preaching, ask for advice from wise men, and read good books in order to learn sound understanding. This understanding will give you the ability to see a problem or opportunity for what it really is instead of what it appears on the surface. Then you will be able to make good decisions that will produce good and beneficial results in every area of life and practice.

⁴ The third "IF" is a continual search for wisdom. This one involves commitment. You must keep on searching for wisdom as long as you live? You need to be like the prospector who goes into the hills and absolutely refuses to return until he has found the mother lode of gold.

The Results of Your Search

⁵ During your search you will figure out what it means to acquire and maintain a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. You will discover that it is a conviction about the LORD's greatness that will drive you to do good in order to please your heavenly Father, and it will empower you to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that you won't let sin break your fellowship with the Father. After you understand the fear of the LORD you will start to discover who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men. ⁶ You will learn that the LORD is the One who gives wisdom and that trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding are found in the Word of God. ⁷ The LORD has a storehouse full of practical wisdom, and there is enough in His storehouse to supply every man and woman in the world with as much wisdom as they need. It is important to understand, though, that He will only give wisdom to those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD. He is also a wall of protection for those who have such sound moral convictions that they will not violate them even if it is convenient at the moment or no one is looking. ⁸ As

a sentry, the LORD will guard your way to see that justice is served, and since He controls every circumstance of life, He will make sure that your manner of living produces a long and fruitful life.

⁹ After you figure out the fear of the LORD and learn who God is, what He is, and how He works in the affairs of men, you will figure out how to live a good and godly life, how to treat others fairly, how to deal with people without bias or favoritism, and how to treat others in a good, godly manner. ¹⁰ You will be able to treat people this way because wisdom will make her home in your heart, and you will find that learning new knowledge is a pleasant and rewarding experience. ¹¹ The discretion you gain will be the sentry that guards you from choosing to become involved in sinful activities, and the understanding you gain will be the watchman that will explain to you all of the hurts, heartaches, and losses that result from engaging in those sinful activities.

You will be delivered from evil men

¹² **Wisdom, knowledge, discretion,** and understanding will rescue you from adopting the manner of living sinful men enjoy, and they will keep you from associating with men who have a filthy and immoral mouth. ¹³ There is good reason to avoid these men because they have abandoned doing what is right in the sight of the LORD in order to enjoy all sorts of sinful practices. The way of life they have chosen is one of darkness, and they blindly follow that pathway until they reach the troubles that await them in the future. ¹⁴ They are thrilled when they can participate in some evil deed, and they rejoice in the twisted morals and speech of the people who come up with the ideas to do those deeds. ¹⁵ They have chosen to follow every crooked path that allures them, and they have strayed from doing what is legal, moral, and good. Son, stay away from them.

You will be delivered from immoral women

¹⁶ **Those four things above** will also deliver you from the adulterous woman who uses flattering words to entice you to engage in illicit sexual relations with her. ¹⁷ Be careful though, because she has abandoned the husband of her youth, and she has not kept her vows to God to be a faithful wife. Therefore, you can safely assume that any promises she would make to you would mean no more to her than the promises she made to God and her husband on her wedding day. ¹⁸ She defiles her house with her illicit sex, making it a gateway to the grave, and any man who has sexual relations with her follows her footsteps down the path that leads to hell. ¹⁹ No man who sleeps with her can ever regain his innocence, and having experienced the thrill of illicit sex, he will desire to do it over and over again. In the end, he simply will not go to heaven when he dies.

The Kind of Companions You Gain When You Choose Wisdom

²⁰ When you gain the kind of wisdom that keeps you from getting involved with evil men and immoral women, you will instead choose to make good men and women your closest companions and imitate their good and godly manner of living. With friends like these encouraging you to do right, you will continue walking the path of doing good and turning away from sin as long as you live. ²¹ Anyone who does what is right in the sight of the LORD will experience a good life, and a man who lives such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing will live to be an old man. ²² On the other hand, the wicked man will experience loss. A man who practices doing evil deeds will die prematurely, and anyone who violates the trust or allegiance of another will be uprooted and discarded like a weed pulled from the garden.

The Blessings that result from Doing Good – How to Be a Righteous Man (Verses 1-18)

Preparing Your Heart – The Easier Part

¹⁻² My son, don't ever forget what I have taught you from the Scriptures, but retain those things by living what you learn. Faithfully practice its teachings until they become a regular habit of life. If you do so, you will reach the point in your life where you will keep these teachings as a normal response from **a heart** that is sensitive to obeying God in everything. The reward for your obedience will be a long and peaceful life filled with prosperous days.

³⁻⁴ Be kind and truthful toward your neighbor, and never stop. Practice these attitudes until they become a regular habit of life. If you do, you will reach the point in your life where you will do these things as a normal response from **a heart** that is sensitive to meeting the needs of others. As a reward for giving of yourself in this way, God will enhance your character in the sight of your neighbor just like a lovely necklace enhances the beauty of a lovely woman. You will also receive favor from God and men by establishing a good reputation in their eyes.

⁵⁻⁶ When you are faced with choices in life, don't make decisions based upon what you think is best. Instead, trust God to direct you. Always seek His wishes by basing every decision upon the teachings of the Word of God. Practice doing this until it becomes a regular habit of life. If you do so, you will reach the point in your life where you will submit to His will as a normal response from **a heart** that is sensitive to God's leading in everything. The LORD will reward you by removing the curves, bumps, and detours in your life that would otherwise hinder you because of your own ignorance and pride.

Showing the LORD You Love Him – The Harder Part

⁷⁻⁸ Once you have determined in your heart to make obedience to God's Word a priority, **show the LORD you fear Him** by turning away from every sin and evil. The reward for keeping yourself pure will be good health and renewed strength each day.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Once you have become a giver of yourself to others, honor the LORD with the possessions you own right now and the income you will receive in the future. **Show the LORD you love Him** by giving to the church and to those in need. As a result of your giving spirit, your financial cup will be full and running over.

¹¹⁻¹² Once you have determined in your heart to trust the LORD to direct you in everything, **show the LORD you trust Him** by allowing Him to correct you whenever and wherever He sees a need in your life. Please remember that the LORD only corrects those He loves dearly, and He will never allow you to experience any difficulty that is not for the good of His own name. If He chooses to take things away from you or allows hardships to come your way, they are intended to make you a better servant of Christ. It is a productive experience when you accept His correction graciously, but it is a painful experience if you rebel against His loving discipline.

These Are the Blessings of Doing Good

¹³ Happy is the man who finds wisdom and gains understanding as well. ¹⁴ Finding and possessing wisdom causes a man to gain more benefits from life than silver or gold could ever buy. ¹⁵ Godly wisdom is of more value than the most priceless jewels, and there is nothing in this world that even compares favorably with her. ¹⁶ This is true because Wisdom generates a long life, enduring wealth, and honor for the man who owns her. ¹⁷ All of her ways are pleasant and all of her paths are filled with peace and contentment. ¹⁸ She is life at its very best to those who espouse her, and those who are committed to wisdom for life are happy men. Son, I pray that you will become this happy man.

The Security that comes from not doing evil – How to remain righteous (Verses 19-31)

The security that comes from avoiding evil

¹⁹ Consider these things: *The LORD used wisdom* to create the world and establish its orbit. *He used sound understanding* to make the atmosphere and place the stars and planets in their places. ²⁰ *He used trustworthy knowledge* to separate the land from the sea and cause springs of water to flow and the rains to fall. ²¹ Now, son, if *these three* were important enough for God to use in creation, they should be equally as important in the affairs of your life. Never lose sight of them. Always use sound wisdom and good discretion ²² because if you do, they will give new and vibrant life to your inner being. When people look at you they will quickly recognize your wisdom and strength of character.

²³ If you practice using *wisdom, understanding, and knowledge* you will walk through life *confident in the knowledge that God will protect you from evil.* You will have this confidence because discretion will guide you around the pitfalls that would otherwise cause you to stumble and fall. ²⁴ When you lie down to sleep you will not be afraid of the adverse circumstances that may come your way. In fact, *your sleep will be peaceful and sweet.* ²⁵ You will not be afraid of the evil things wicked men might try to do to you or of the hurts, heartaches, or losses they may cause you because ²⁶ the LORD will watch over you and *will keep you from being caught in the trap they set for you.* There is no one who can harm you as long as the LORD is your defender.

The evils a righteous man must avoid

²⁷ Since you desire to be a righteous man, always do your best to *help others* when they have a genuine need when you have the ability to do so. Don't fail to see the need or look the other way, and then walk on by as though you didn't see it.

²⁸ Since you desire to be a righteous man, don't put off *giving some of your possessions* to someone who has a genuine need and has come to you for help. Do not be like the wicked man who has what is needed in his hand to meet that need but says, "Come back another time, and I'll help you." Obviously he doesn't intend to help.

²⁹ Since you desire to be a righteous man, always try your best to *be truthful with your neighbor.* Do not be like the wicked man who secretly plots harmful or deceitful things against his neighbor behind his back while his neighbor feels everything is alright between them.

³⁰ Since you desire to be a righteous man, *be kind to all men* and try to get along with everyone. Do not be like the wicked man who argues and fights with other men even if they have done nothing to deserve such harsh treatment.

³¹ Since you desire to be a righteous man, always do your best to *be a peacemaker* and live a good, clean life. Never feel like you have missed out on some desirable experiences just because you are not like the wicked man, and do not choose to be an accomplice with him in any of his activities or attitudes. Be careful because he will get you hurt in the end.

Why you should pursue righteousness rather than wickedness. Consider these:

³² The LORD is the *enemy* of a man who is selfish and unwilling to help his neighbor when there is a genuine need. On the other hand, He has the *closest relationship possible* with the man of integrity who always tries to help his neighbor when there is a genuine need, even when giving is a hardship for him.

³³ The LORD allows *troubles and heartaches* to overwhelm the wicked man because of his deceit and fighting. On the contrary, He pours out *large measures of blessings* upon the man who interacts with his neighbor with kindness and truth.

³⁴ While the LORD *scoffs at and ridicules* the man who scoffs at God and His Word, He supplies *abundant grace and kindness* to the man who patiently bears up under any evil directed against him without seeking to get even with the one who propagated that evil.

³⁵ In conclusion, you must make a choice. The righteous lifestyle of a wise man will result in honor, but the disgusting acts of a foolish or wicked man will result in shame. Now, son, which one of these two men will you be? I pray you will choose wisely.

Proverbs Chapter 4

Dad's Teaching Worked for Me

¹ Son, stop what you are doing, and come sit down next to me. There is something very important I need to share with you. It is so important that I must have your undivided attention. Listen carefully to what I have to say, and you will gain accurate and trustworthy understanding. ² Please don't pass it off as being unimportant, and don't give up on it without giving it a chance to work for you.

³ Son, when I was just a child in my father's eyes, and a tender lad in the sight of my mother, ⁴ my father talked to me just like I'm talking to you right now. What he taught me has been so helpful that I feel compelled to share it with you. My father said,

"Son, make obeying my teachings a matter of the heart, and don't ever forget them. Do what I say, and you will live a long and fruitful life. ⁵ Do whatever it takes to *find the gift of wisdom*, and work as hard as you can to *gain understanding*. Never forget them or turn away from following them. ⁶ If you continue to pursue and use wisdom, she will protect you, and if you love her, she will watch over you like a loving mother cares for her baby.

⁷ Engaging in a search for wisdom is indeed the starting point of becoming wise. Work hard at gaining understanding because wisdom is the most important thing you will ever find. Search diligently for her, and as you gain understanding, wisdom will give herself to you. This wisdom is a gift from God, and this is the only way you can ever acquire wisdom. ⁸ Once you have found her, consider her the most valuable prize you could ever possess. When she is yours, she will cause people to look up to you. Hold her close as in a loving embrace, and she will elevate you to a place of honor. ⁹ She will crown you with a heart that displays a kind and generous spirit, and she will make you a lovely person on the inside as well as on the outside.

My Teaching will Work for You

¹⁰ Son, if you will listen to the things I want to teach you and accept them just like I listened to my father and accepted the things he taught me, then you will experience a long and fruitful life. ¹¹ I have taught you how to become a wise man, and shown you by my own example how to live a life that is pleasing to the LORD. ¹² If you do what I am teaching you, you will not be hindered as you walk the path of life, and nothing will make you stumble or fall while you run the race of life. ¹³ Get a firm hold on all of the instructions I give you, and never let them go. If you will guard yourself by committing to live this way and be careful to maintain the wisdom you already have, you will continue to be a wise man and experience life at its best.

¹⁴ Son, there are certain things that you must avoid at all cost if you are going to gain and maintain wisdom. Don't decide on your own to join wicked men in their sinful activities, and if a wicked man offers you the opportunity to go with him while he practices his sin, tell him you do not want anything to do with it. ¹⁵ Make a point of staying away from places where sinful acts are being done. If you know where someone is going to do them, do not purposely go that way, even out of curiosity. If you stumble across a questionable situation, quickly turn and go your way without even looking back.

¹⁶ It is in your best interest to avoid the wicked man. This is important because he is consumed with doing perverted and sinful acts. In fact, he can't sleep unless he has done something sinful or caused hurt or loss for an innocent and unsuspecting individual. When he finally does get to sleep, all he can dream about is more and better ways of practicing his wicked and sinful deeds. ¹⁷ He is utterly consumed with doing immoral or depraved deeds, and he is out of control when it comes to using physical force to hurt others or violate their rights. Any man who is involved with these kinds of things is certainly not a wise man. ¹⁸ Be assured, though, that the path through life for the man who is morally pure and practices doing good to his neighbor is like the most spectacular sunrise. The little bit of light he receives in the beginning keeps getting brighter and brighter until it reaches its fullness. ¹⁹ While this is true for the righteous man, it

is not so for the man who practices doing evil. The path he has chosen is like walking a trail in total darkness. He does not know where he is going nor does he see the obstacles that make him stumble on a regular basis. At some point, he will trip and fall, never to rise again.

Learn to Control Your Mouth, Eyes and Feet

²⁰ Son, pay close attention to what I am telling you, and be ready and willing to actually listen to what I say. ²¹ Don't let these things out of your sight. In fact, practice them until they become an expression of who and what you are on the inside. ²² Those who find these things and do them will experience life at its very best, and enjoy a strong and healthy body.

²³ Now, here is the key to the whole matter. Be very, very careful about what you allow to reside in your heart because everything you do, say, or think is an expression of what you are in your heart—that is, what you value most. In order to accomplish this, here is what you must do.

²⁴ First, quit saying things that give the impression that error is the truth, and quit speaking in a manner that is crude, rude, or deviates from what is commonly considered to be good and right ^{<devious dd>}. Instead, always speak the truth in kindness. ²⁵ Second, don't let your eyes wander, or fix your sight on the kind of things that could lead you into sin. Instead, look straight ahead at the goal of becoming more and more Christ-like. Fix your gaze upon the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ²⁶ Third, use good discretion in deciding where you will go and what you will do when you get there. If you only go to places where you would be proud to take your LORD then He will bless you and be your security. ²⁷ Don't get side-tracked by any sinful activity, and don't go where sinful things take place. Fear the LORD and avoid or abandon every sinful practice, and you are sure to experience the joy of God's love and approval.

Proverbs Chapter 5

The best alternative to an adulteress woman

The enticing speech of the adulteress

¹ Son, I would like to talk to you about adulterous women. What I have to tell you can save you a lot of pain and heartache. Pay close attention because you can learn a great deal from the wisdom and understanding I have gained through the years. ² If you grasp these truths, you will be able to recognize when a woman is coming on to you with illicit sexual relations in mind, and then you will be able to tell her in no uncertain terms that you are not interested.

³ Understand something here. This kind of woman knows a man's sex drive is very strong and that she can use his desire to her advantage. Her flattering words are as sweet to the ear of a willing man as honey to his taste, and they flow down smoothly into the inner being of the man who allows his ego to be inflated by the interest she shows in him. ⁴ Do not be fooled by her though because after she has seduced a man and has had illicit sexual relations with him, she will become as distasteful to him as the most bitter herb. In the end, she will cut and wound him as though she were the sharpest of knives. ⁵ She not only leads him down the pathway of death that descends into hell, but she takes the same path herself. ⁶ She does not give the slightest thought about the consequences of the lifestyle she has chosen to follow, and all of her ways are both unstable and uncertain. Unfortunately, she has no concept of the devastation her actions produce.

The high cost of indulging and the deep regret that follows

⁷ Now, son, be sure to learn one thing, and never forget it. ⁸ Stay as far away from the adulterous woman as you can, and don't even go near where she practices her sin. ⁹ If you are ever foolish enough to engage in sexual relations with her, this is what it will cost:

- 1) You will end up giving away the strength of your youth, and
- 2) Satan, that cruel one, will have you in slavery for years to come;
- 3) ¹⁰ your physical strength will be wasted in serving as a slave to others, and

- 4) all of your hard-earned wealth and possessions will become the property of some stranger;
- 5) ¹¹ in the end you will groan because of the pain of your great loss, and
- 6) you will experience deep regret as your body is consumed with disease;
- 7) ¹² then you will say out loud,

“I was a fool to hate the instruction of those who taught me the truth when I was young, and I was stupid to let my heart reject those who tried to correct me for my own good. ¹³ I turned a deaf ear to those who tried to instruct me in the right way to live, and I was not willing to hear what they had to say. ¹⁴ I have ruined my testimony among the people of my community and especially among believers in my church.”

The best defense against the adulteress is your own wife

¹⁵ Son, you never need to feel compelled to lie with another man’s wife because God has provided or will provide your own wife as the perfect alternative to the adulteress. She is yours alone, and no one has the right to lie with her except you. Allow her to be as refreshing to you as a well of water from which you can draw a cool drink on a hot day. She can satisfy all of your sexual desires as often as the need arises. ¹⁶ After all, there is no good reason why your sperm should be implanted into several women whether they live in your town or other parts of the country. A decent man would be ashamed for people to discover that he had fathered several illegitimate children or was responsible for the abortion of precious babies? ¹⁷ Be intimate with your wife alone. That way all of the children you father will be your own and not belong to strangers. ¹⁸ Let your sexual relations be blessed as you delight yourself in the wife you married when you were young. ¹⁹ Let her be as exciting and inviting to you as a doe in heat is to a buck ready for mating. Always allow her to satisfy your desire to see, touch, and fondle a woman’s breasts, and always give her the opportunity to arouse and stimulate you to sexual passion as an expression of her love for you.

²⁰ After all, why should you allow another man’s wife to excite you to sexual passion or meet your need to embrace a woman in sexual intimacy while fondling her breasts? ²¹ Do not be fooled for a moment into thinking you can get away with it either because the LORD sees and records every lustful desire and act you commit. He even sees the things you do in the darkness of night. ²² Any man who has illicit sexual relations with an adulteress woman will be captured in the trap that his own sins set for him, and he will be restrained in that trap as though he had been bound by strong ropes. ²³ He will die since he did not learn to follow sound instruction, and while he is fully engrossed in his sin, he will completely lose sight of the path of life.

Proverbs Chapter 6

The foolishness of cosigning for someone else

¹ If you have been foolish enough to agree to be responsible for the debt of your neighbor by cosigning on a loan, or if you have pledged your possessions as collateral for the debt of a stranger, ² you have been caught in a very dangerous financial trap. Your ignorance will most likely cost you for a long time to come, and there is a good chance that you will end up forfeiting your possessions to the creditor when that stranger fails to repay his loan.

³ If you have already put yourself at the mercy of your neighbor, do what I tell you, and deliver yourself from such a disastrous decision. Go to his creditor and humble yourself before him. Beg him to release you from the contract. ⁴ Do not sleep on it overnight or even take a short nap to think about what you will do. Go immediately and persuade him to release you. Keep asking until he agrees to remove your name from the contract. ⁵ Do not give up until you have delivered yourself like the deer when it escapes from the hunter’s trap or like the bird when it escapes from the trainer’s grasp. You must make up your mind that you will not quit trying until you are no longer responsible.

How to overcome being a lazy man

⁶ Are you a lazy man? If so, study the ant. Through evaluating the way she works and learning from her example, you have the opportunity to become a wise man. ⁷ Notice that she has no one standing over her telling her *when to work*, no supervisor telling her *how to work*, and no governmental authority demanding *that she work at all*. She is self-motivated and ⁸ gathers her provisions for the winter when they are available in the spring and summer. Consequently, she has enough provisions stored away to survive the rough winter months ahead.

⁹ How long will you waste your life sleeping? When will you wake up and go to work? ¹⁰ If you continue getting just a little more sleep, taking a few more short naps, or sitting back to relax for a while longer, you will end up with nothing to show for your time. ¹¹ In fact, poverty will engulf you as it has the unfortunate man on skid row, and your need of provision for survival will overpower you as though it were a robber armed with a deadly weapon. This will happen to you if you are lazy and do not change your ways. Realize that you have the opportunity to overcome being lazy by going to work and working hard. Will you do it?

How men view a wicked man—they see the outward man

¹² Good men look at a wicked man with disgust because they see the evil things he does. Points 1-4 show how a wicked man perverts his communication, and points 5-6 show his perverted heart.

- 1) His words are either crude, rude, immoral or downright lies.
- 2) ¹³ He winks the eye when he has determined to do some evil act or to get revenge,
- 3) He is quick to run from responsibility for his actions,
- 4) He points his finger at other people so that they will take the blame for his sins,
- 5) ¹⁴ His perverted heart is constantly devising new sinful acts to perform, and
- 6) He is continually causing arguments and divisions among those around him.

¹⁵ As a result of his wicked deeds, calamity will come upon him in a moment of time, and it will completely engulf him. His life will simply fall apart in an instant, and he will not escape the total devastation that follows. He will learn too late that a man always reaps what he has sown.

How God views a wicked man—He sees the inward man

¹⁶ The LORD looks at a worthless man with disgust because he sees the evil residing in his heart. There are seven things he hates about the man, and the seventh is worse than the first six. He, despises any or all of the following:

- 1) ¹⁷ The way his pride makes that him think he is better, more able, or more deserving than his neighbor,
- 2) the way he lies in an attempt to get what he wants out of life,
- 3) the way he will murder innocent people,
- 4) ¹⁸ the way his perverted heart is constantly devising more wicked plans to perform,
- 5) the way his feet are always running to the scene of some evil act so that he can be part of the action,
- 6) ¹⁹ the way he lies about what he has seen or heard when he is called upon to be a witness in a court of law, and
- 7) the way he slanders another or causes fights and disagreements among brothers.

Adultery—the hurt that comes from a jealous husband

1) Pay attention. This can save your life

²⁰ My son, be sure to do what I have instructed you from the Bible since childhood, and do not abandon what your mother has taught about obeying the Bible during your growing up years. ²¹ Hide these teachings deep within your inner being, and practice them faithfully. If you do, they will enhance the beauty of your character in the sight of men the same way a lovely necklace enhances the looks of a beautiful woman. ²² During your daily activities your obedience to the Scriptures will guide you; when you sleep your obedience will be your security; and when you are awake the commandments and teachings of the Scriptures will talk to you instructing you each time you must choose between right and wrong.

²³ There are three good reasons why these teachings will guide you: 1) **the commands of the Word of God** are a bright light that will illuminate your way as you walk the path of life, 2) **the teachings of the Word of God** are a light that refines your understanding and gives insight to help you choose the right direction in life, and 3) **the discipline that the Word of God provides** is the correction that will keep you from wandering off the straight and narrow path.

2) The Tricks of the Trade Used By an Adulteress to Seduce a Man

²⁴ Learning and obeying the Scriptures will keep you from becoming prey to a sexually promiscuous woman. If you are not careful, there are three things that can cause you to succumb to the temptation of committing adultery. You must guard yourself against all of them. First, do not let her flattering words inflate your ego or make you feel that she really finds you desirable. If you allow yourself to be attracted by her alluring speech, eventually you may fall for her. ²⁵ Second, do not allow yourself to lust after her beautiful body or you will end up desiring to have it for your own selfish use. If you keep looking at a woman again and again in this manner, sooner or later you may fall into sin with her. Finally, do not let her sexy, seductive, sensual body movements and facial gestures make you think she really wants you. She may want you, but do not allow yourself to entertain fancies that you should have her for your own selfish use.

3) The Tragic Consequences of Jealousy

²⁶ An adulterous woman preys on any naive man she can seduce to lie with her, and after she is finished with him, he is of little more value to her than an ordinary loaf of bread. Always remember that she is a skillful hunter, and without realizing it she is seeking to take his life.

²⁷ Let me ask you something. Can a man pick up a piece of red hot charcoal and put it into his shirt pocket without his clothes being burned? ²⁸ Can a man walk barefooted across hot coals without scorching his feet? ²⁹ Of course not, but the man who has sexual relations with his neighbor's wife will be burned and scarred just as surely as if he had walked on those cinders. He cannot avoid being punished in some way or another.

³⁰ Men do not think badly of a man who steals food because he is starving, ³¹ but regardless of the reason, when he is discovered he will be required to pay back seven times as much as he stole. It may mean that he will have to forfeit all he owns as payment for what he stole, but he will still be required to make restitution. ³² In a similar manner, the man who commits adultery with a woman has no sense at all. Any man who engages in such sin will end up destroying himself. ³³ Consequently, he will receive hurts and heartaches in abundance, and his reputation will be trashed. He will never be able to rid himself of the disgrace.

³⁴ Who will cause his hurts and heartaches? It is the husband of the woman with whom he had illicit sexual relations. Her jealous husband may become so angry that he will not rest until he gets even with his wife's lover. Nothing the offender can say will cause him to abandon his revenge. ³⁵ It does not matter how much money the man offers because her husband will not accept it. No matter how many gifts he offers, her husband will still be determined to take that man's life. Certainly the pain he will suffer is not worth the few moments of stolen pleasure. What a tragic end.

The ruin that results from adultery

A father's warning

¹ Son, this chapter is a picture of the last two verses of chapter five. I cannot overemphasize how important it is for you to obey the things I teach you. Make them your highest priority in life. ² If they become that important, you will live a long and full life. In the future be sure to continue viewing my teachings as the most precious things you have ever seen or heard. ³ If you regularly practice doing three things, you will always remember my instructions. You can accomplish this by tying a string around your finger so that when you see it your thoughts will be directed toward my teachings. You can also write them on the tablet of your heart by meditating upon them day and night until they become an integral part of who and what you are. In addition, ⁴ keep telling yourself that wisdom is as much a part of your life as your own blood sister, and remind yourself often that understanding is as much a friend as the most intimate of friends.

⁵ If you meditate upon my teachings in this manner and make it a habit of life, they will keep you from falling prey to an adulterous woman as she seeks to seduce you with her sweet and flattering words. Be warned! She is a cunning one, so be very careful to recognize the tools of her trade.

Her Method of Seducing a Man

⁶ Solomon said that he looked out the window of his palace one day, and observed something very interesting. ⁷ As he looked, he saw a young man walking down the street. This guy was naive and did not have the sense to carefully evaluate the consequences of his actions. ⁸ He was making his way to the street corner where he could see the house of another man's wife. He knew ahead of time where she would likely be and what she had to offer. Well, since she wasn't there, he headed directly for her house. ⁹ Of course he waited until it was almost dark before he started on his way because he thought that by the time he got there, the whole town would be dark enough that no one would see him with her.

¹⁰ The woman wasn't content to stay in her house, so before he got all the way to her house, she ran to greet him, and what an inviting reception he received. She was dressed in seductive, sexy clothes similar to what a prostitute would wear, and she used the craftiness of her heart to walk and move in a way that made her look even more seductive. ¹¹ Since the man had little or no sound moral values by which to discipline himself, he was quickly attracted by her sensuous ways. She was loud, aggressive, and displayed a rebellious attitude toward anyone who would attempt to restrain her from practicing her sinful ways. ¹² She was the kind of woman who was not content to stay at home, so she would spend much of her time in the streets and in the malls. There she would stand in a place that was somewhat concealed from the general public but at the same time easily seen by any man who wanted to engage in illicit sexual pleasures with her. It was in these places that she sought an opportunity to seduce another man.

¹³ When she saw him in front of her house, she was the one who initiated the greetings. She put her arms around him, kissed him with the most sensual kisses, and without any sense of shame she boldly said to him,

¹⁴ "Today I was required to go to church to offer a sacrifice to God, and I did what was expected of me. Now that I am in good standing with the church ¹⁵ we are free to do whatever we want. Therefore, this is your lucky day. I have come into the street to search diligently for you, and I finally found you. I want more than anything to spend the night together with you. ¹⁶ I have put soft, silky sheets on my bed just for you, and ¹⁷ I have used the best perfumes to make our night together one that you will remember for the rest of your life.

¹⁸ Come with me. We can enjoy lovemaking all night, and we can satisfy our passions with caresses and sexual pleasures until the morning. ¹⁹ Just in case you are concerned about my husband walking in on us, don't give it a second thought. He is away on a long trip. ²⁰ He went by the bank, withdrew a lot of money, and left town. He said he would not

be back for at least a month. So, we have all the time we need to get our fill of caresses and sexual pleasures. Well, are you ready for the night of your life?"

²¹ Solomon watched as her enticing speech and flattery caused him to yield. ²² Without a moment's hesitation he followed her into her bed. He followed her just like a dumb cow is led to the slaughterhouse and like a fool, not knowing what awaits him, is taken to the place where he will be publicly whipped. ²³ This naïve young man kept on coming back to her again and again until a bullet from her husband's rifle pierced deep into his chest. You see, just like a bird is unaware of the danger of the hunter's trap until it catches her, so this man was ignorant of the fact that their fling might cost him his life. He was so involved with the exhilaration of the moment that he didn't give a thought about the cost or consequences.

The High Cost of Participating

²⁴ Now, son, listen to me, and pay close attention to all that I have taught you. ²⁵ Please, please, don't let your heart turn aside from the straight and narrow way to follow this kind of woman down the path of destruction that accompanies sexual impurity. Don't even wander near the places she frequents. ²⁶ Recognize that there have been more men than you can count who have become victims that she has destroyed. Don't become another one. ²⁷ Her house may seem enticing, but it is the pathway that leads to hell with steps descending right into the chambers of death. Be careful that you do not walk that pathway with her.

Proverbs Chapter 8

1) Wisdom's call

¹ Hello, I am wisdom. I am what Proverbs is all about, and I am inviting you to come to me. My close companion is understanding, and she too is shouting for you to choose me? You will not hear an audible call, but nonetheless, I am calling. ² I call from the most visible places in town. Those places include the busiest malls, the most heavily traveled intersections, and ³ every place where people normally congregate. These are where you can hear me saying,

⁴ "Everyone! Listen to me because I am offering myself to you. ⁵ You who are naive and seldom consider the consequences of your choices, I invite you to come to me and learn how to make good decisions that will produce good and beneficial results. Then too, you who are fools and think you already know everything you will ever need to know, I invite you to learn self-discipline and gain the ability to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice.

⁶ Listen, and I will tell you about myself. When I speak I will say things that are of excellent moral value and things that are good and right in every other way. ⁷ I always tell the truth because it is against my nature to say anything that is wicked or sinful. ⁸ Every word that I speak is designed to help a man learn better ways to be morally pure and do good to and for his neighbor. ⁹ I never say anything that distorts the truth or leads someone off the straight and narrow path. Everything I say is straightforward to those who understand the truth, and those who have learned trustworthy knowledge easily recognize that my words are good and right.

¹⁰ When I teach you or call you down for your own good, consider my rebuke more valuable than silver, and consider the trustworthy knowledge I impart to you as more valuable than the finest gold. These things are certainly more valuable than any precious metals. ¹¹ Realize also that I, wisdom, am a much better and more productive possession than the most priceless jewels. There is nothing that you could desire that even remotely compares favorably with me. Every material possession falls far short of what I have to offer you."

2) Wisdom's companions

¹² I am wisdom, and I abide in the life of any prudent man who carefully evaluates the consequences of the decisions he makes in life. I am the one who enables him to acquire more and more trustworthy knowledge and sound decision-making abilities. ¹³ A genuine fear of the LORD is to hate evil enough to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. When you gain a genuine, biblical fear the LORD, you will despise sin as much as I do. Now, let me tell you the things I hate, and I hope you will hate them too: 1) Boastful pride, 2) an overbearing spirit of arrogance that makes a man treat others like dirt and makes him miserable to be around, 3) morally perverted actions and attitudes, and 4) a filthy mouth that twists and perverts the truth. I hate all of these things. ¹⁴ Because I always do good and never evil, I am the only source of trustworthy counsel and sound decision-making. I am practical wisdom and am built solely upon sound understanding. As a result, I am the most powerful force in the universe. ¹⁵ It is by holding fast to me that kings reign for long periods of time and judges administer justice in the courts where they preside. ¹⁶ By me princes and great men are able to come to a place of authority, and judges are able to make rulings with fairness.

¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who search for me diligently, carefully, and continually will find me. ¹⁸ I will endow them with ample possessions, I will elevate them to a place of honor, I will give them wealth that lasts for eternity, and I will teach them to be morally pure and practice doing good to their neighbors. ¹⁹ As they use these gifts, the fruit of their activities will produce better results than the purest gold, and the dividend from their good and kind deeds will be greater than the choicest silver. ²⁰ I walk only with men who are morally pure and practice doing good to their neighbors, and I walk only where justice is practiced. ²¹ I do this in order to give real wealth to those who truly love and desire me, and I give it until their cup of wealth literally overflows.

3) Wisdom's credentials

Wisdom worked in eternity past

²² The LORD, pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, possessed me before the beginning of time, before His work of creating the heavens and the earth even began. ²³ Simply put, I have existed with Him from eternity past.

Wisdom worked when the earth was being made

When the LORD started the work of creating the earth, I was there. ²⁴ Before the oceans were filled with water and the springs flowed with water, I was there. ²⁵ Before the mountains and the hills were separated from the valleys, I was there. ²⁶ Before He made the earth, the fields in it, or even the dust of the earth, I was there.

Wisdom had a major part when all creation

²⁷ When He was in the act of putting the heavens in place, I was there. When He made the earth round so that the waters would stay in place, I was there. ²⁸ When He made the skies above and put the springs of water in their places below, I was there. ²⁹ When He established the boundaries of the seas so that they would stay in their proper places and when He surveyed the foundations of the earth, I was there.

Wisdom was right beside the LORD through all of it

³⁰ Throughout all of creation I have been right beside the LORD, performing the task of a master craftsman. Because I did such a meticulously good job, He was delighted with me every step of the way. As a result, I was always rejoicing in His presence. ³¹ I rejoiced in the world He had made with all of its beauty and complexity, and I rejoiced in the sons of men who choose to love me.

4) Wisdom's conclusion

³² Considering all that I am and all that I have done, will you listen to Me and obey what I tell you? If you do what I say, I will bring unnumbered blessings your way. ³³ Pay close attention, take it to heart, and do exactly what I tell you. If you do, you will become a wise man. Never neglect my teachings because they are what will make your life satisfying and complete. ³⁴ If you will listen to me every time I speak, look for me every place you go, and wait patiently for the discipline, correction, and rebuke I want to give you, then you will find blessings beyond your wildest dreams. ³⁵ If you will faithfully do these things you will experience life at its best, and the LORD will shower you with His love and favor. ³⁶ On the other hand, anyone who sins against me hurts himself without even knowing it, and every man who hates me loves the things that bring about a premature death. This kind of man will be destroyed by the consequences of his sin without knowing that he did it to himself.

Proverbs Chapter 9

Wisdom – God's best

¹ Wisdom has built the mansion in which she lives. She has placed beautiful supporting pillars at all of the right places to give the structure strength and elegance. By placing these pillars she has made sure that there are no weaknesses in the structure that would allow it to fail under the storms of life. ² She has prepared delicious foods, mixed excellent wines, and set a dinner table fit for a king. ³ She has prepared everything thoroughly and completely, and now she has sent her maidens to the most visible places of the city with instructions to call men to her feast. ⁴ Each of them now calls out and says,

“You who are naive and rarely consider the consequences of your choices in life, ⁵ and you who are fools and think you already know all you need to get through life, listen to me. All of you are invited to come to the banquet wisdom has prepared for you. This is not an invitation to be a one-time guest at her table, but it is an offer to become a member of the family. In fact, you can come to her banquet hall for every meal. Eat her food and drink her wine. While you sit at her table, she will feed you with wisdom, instruct you with trustworthy knowledge, and enlighten you with sound understanding. She is waiting at her table to supply you with everything you will need to become wise and live a good, godly life. ⁶ If you will forsake your foolish manner of living and learn from her, you will experience life at its best. By feasting at her table, you will make continual progress toward gaining the wisdom to live good and godly and know where you are going in life.”

Note: Choosing wisdom is the best choice you could ever make, but there is another choice. Before I share that choice with you, I want you to understand that verses 7-12 show that a wise man can tell what kind of person you are by how you respond to rebuke. Read on, and see.

Which are You—A Scoffer or A Wise man

⁷ If you correct a man who scoffs at God and His Word, he will treat you with *disgust*, and if you rebuke a man who is immoral and practices doing evil, you will get an earful of *insults*. ⁸ Do not rebuke a scoffer unless you want him to *hate you* because that is exactly what he will do.

On the other hand, if you correct a wise man, he will be grateful for your concern and will *love you* for it. ⁹ If you give advice to a wise man, he will *become even wiser*. Teach a man who is morally pure and practices doing good to his neighbor, and he will *learn more ways* of being morally pure, and doing good to his neighbor.

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the basis upon which wisdom is gained, and if you desire to be wise, you must first acquire and maintain a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD. This belief demonstrates itself as a strong conviction to obey the Word of God in order to please your heavenly Father, and a strong conviction to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that you will not break sweet fellowship with the Father. Once you have gained a fear of the LORD you will start to discover who God is, what He is, and

how He works in the affairs of men. This, son, is understanding. ¹¹ When you practice using wisdom you will experience a long and productive life. ¹² If you are a wise man, you alone will receive the bulk of the blessings and benefits, but if you scoff at God and His Word, you alone will bear the shame and guilt of your sin. Others will be affected for good or to their detriment as they associate with you, but you are the one that is affected most by being wise or scoffing.

The Woman of Folly – Satan’s Imitation

¹³ The prostitute is loud and brags about her willingness to jump in bed with one man after another. This foolish woman does not evaluate the consequences of her actions and does not realize how she is destroying her life and the lives of the men that lie with her. ¹⁴ This must be a prostitute because she sits at a conspicuous place near the door of her house. It is located in the most visible place in town so that any man who wants to have sex will know exactly where to find her. ¹⁵ There she calls out to any men who happens to pass by her house, and she especially targets decent men who are trying to live good lives. ¹⁶ She makes a point of looking for men who don’t have enough understanding to avoid the hurts, heartaches, losses, and possible premature death that result from an illicit sexual relationship. To them she says,

“You who are naive and seldom consider the consequences of your choices in life, listen to what I have to offer you. Come join me in bed, and we’ll have a thrilling time! I know you’ll enjoy it because stealing sexual pleasure is as sweet and exhilarating an experience as stealing a watermelon out of your neighbor’s watermelon patch. Having sex with me in secret is as pleasant as eating pastries after you have stolen them from of the bakery. Come join me. You know I’m right!”

¹⁸ To the naïve man or to the man lacking understanding this may look and sound like a wonderful opportunity to experience some wonderful physical pleasures, but any man who joins her in illicit sexual pleasures has no more understanding about the consequences of his actions than the woman who entices him. Without even knowing it, he is accepting an invitation to experience a premature death because her house is the place that has already claimed the lives of numbers of men before him. In fact, the pathway to her bed descends into the depths of hell itself, and anyone who makes a habit of joining her will end up there.

Chapters 10 through 15 — Most of these verses use contrasting parallels (such as “This is good, but that is bad,” or “this is bad, but that is good”).

Chapter 10

^{10:1} The following verses form a collection of proverbs that Solomon either wrote himself or acquired from other sources and assembled in this book. He knew that what a son is and does definitely affects his parents in a big way, so he started this section with the following verse:

A wise son has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live.¹ Because he is wise and makes good choices that produce the best results in every area of life and practice, he makes his parents thrilled over and over again that they have such a good son. On the other hand, a foolish son is bullheaded, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. Since his approach to life is distorted, he does all kinds of stupid and senseless things that weigh his parents down with one emotional hurt or heartache after another.

² Acquiring wealth, possessions, or treasures through illegal, illicit or unethical means may profit in the beginning, but those things will not produce beneficial and lasting results for their new owner. In fact, many times this wicked practice only results in the doer’s premature death. On the other hand, living a good, just, right, and lawful life based upon sound biblical morals and godly principles <righteousness> continually rescues the doer from an early grave.

³ The LORD Jesus will not allow a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} to go hungry. In fact, He gladly meets this man's every need. On the other hand, the LORD will completely disregard the strong and selfish desires of those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>}. In fact, the LORD will not do anything help such men accomplish their evil goals or satisfy their evil desires.

⁴ A man who will not do a good job or takes shortcuts in order to get out of work will become a poor man and stay that way unless he changes. On the other hand, a man who is careful, pays attention to details, and is thorough in his work will one day become well-to-do.

⁵ A wise son carefully evaluates the work options presented to him, understands the consequences of his choices, and then works hard and smart to accomplish **what** needs to be done **when** it needs to be done. This kind of discernment demonstrates how to act wisely. On the other hand, a lazy son sleeps when work needs to be done. In doing so, he demonstrates how to bring shame and embarrassment upon himself, his parents, and his family.

⁶ Those who not only speak the truth but also live in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} will be rewarded with good, prosperous, and beneficial things. This is the normal and natural result of adopting such a godly lifestyle. On the other hand, a son who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} cannot experience such blessings because whenever he speaks, his words are purposely designed to hide the violence, cruelty, or injustice he intends to force upon some unsuspecting victim.

⁷ Recalling all of the good things about a man who lived a good, just, right, and lawful life ^{<righteous>} is always a pleasant and welcome experience. On the other hand, both the fame and the reputation of a man who was hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} will pass into obscurity like rotten wood changes into dirt and is gone forever.

⁸ A son whose whole inner being is saturated with the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>}¹ will always accept and practice the trustworthy things his parents, pastor, teachers, and the Scriptures teach him. On the other hand, a fool is bullheaded, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues anytime someone disagrees with him. Since a fool's words mirror his attitude, the way he talks incessantly about foolish and senseless things will cause him to reap hurts, losses, and disappointments in abundance. Sooner or later his life will turn into a complete disaster, and he will be cast away like a piece of garbage.

⁹ A man of integrity lives according to sound moral, legal, and spiritual convictions and will not violate them for any reason. By living this way he is doing the very thing that will make his life and future secure. He will never experience the same kind of dangers, anxieties, or needs the wicked endure as a result of their sinful practices. On the other hand, a man whose manner of living is permeated with illegal, immoral, or unethical thoughts and deeds will in time show others that he is a guilty man. He will never experience the peace and security that a man of integrity knows.

¹⁰ A man who winks at you or at his companions when he talks to you has evil intent. He may speak kind words, but in his heart he fully intends to hurt you, hurt someone you love, or take something of value from you. In addition, a fool is bullheaded, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. He will talk and talk and talk long after he has finished what he has to say. Therefore, he will reap hurts, losses, and disappointments in abundance. Sooner or later his life will turn into a complete disaster, and he will be cast away like a piece of garbage. While the man who winks the eye causes trouble for others, the babbling fool causes hurts for himself.

¹¹ Words spoken by a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} are refreshing to the soul and bring healing to the brokenhearted. On the other hand, a wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. He is consumed with committing acts of violence, cruelty, or injustice, so when he speaks, his words are calculated to hide his plans for committing more acts of violence, cruelty, or injustice.

Note: KJV rendering is "violence covers his mouth." NASB rendering is "his mouth conceals violence."

¹² When a man harbors a hostile attitude toward someone because he feels he has been wronged or hurt in some way, he incites all kinds of arguments, fights, and misunderstandings. On the other hand, a man who truly loves other people and desires to meet their needs is quick to overlook the wrongs and injustices others do to him, and he simply will not share those things with others even as a prayer request.

¹³ Words spoken by a man with good understanding, insight, and perception are saturated with wisdom. If you listen carefully to what he has to say, you will learn how to make good choices resulting in the best possible outcome in every area of life and practice. On the other hand, severe punishment awaits a man who lacks trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, good discretion, and consistent self-discipline. Because he lacks these things he cannot consistently make good choices that produce good results. As a result, he will be punished over and over again for his continued hurtful and costly choices in life.

¹⁴ Men who have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise men>₁} will constantly be looking and listening for more knowledge of the truth and of God Himself ^{<knowledge>₂}. Every time they encounter such trustworthy knowledge they will store it in their hearts and minds for future use. Oh, but a foolish man is not as smart as the wise man. He is unteachable because he is bullheaded, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. When he speaks, his words express his perverted attitude toward life and eternity. As a result of what he says, it won't be long before his life will simply fall apart in ruins.

¹⁵ The wealth a rich man hoards is to him like the walls of a strong fortress. In his heart he feels his money will protect him from every hurt, heartache, and setback life may bring his way. Although this kind of man is deceived, many poor men are equally deceived. Their lack of material goods and apparent inability to rise above their desperate situation has them convinced that they are trapped in that condition for life. Then they simply give up and let their poverty take its toll. In the end, the poor man's life and future simply fall apart in ruins.

¹⁶ Everything we do has consequences. Living a good and godly life by following the principles and commandments of the Scriptures and obeying the laws of the land produces a life that is enjoyable, satisfying, and secure. On the other hand, life is not so good for the man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}. All he can expect in return is punishment for all of his evil thoughts and deeds. The fact that he will be punished someday is equally as certain as the fact that the righteous man will be blessed.

¹⁷ A man will experience life at its best if he pays close attention when he is being disciplined, corrected, or called down for his own good and then does what he has been instructed. A man who does this has found the right path to follow through life. On the other hand, those who will not pay attention to or refuse to accept the counsel of a wise man when he tries to discipline, correct, or call them down for their own good will get lost on the road of life and will wander aimlessly, never knowing the truth that would enable them to experience life at its best.

¹⁸ A man who hides an intense hostility toward another person because he feels he has been wronged or hurt in some way must lie about it over and over again in order to cover up that hatred. Don't trust him. Hiding hostility is a terrible thing to do, but giving an evil report about another person with the intent to defame or malign him by making such a false accusation ^{<slander>} is equally as damaging as hiding pent-up hatred. Anyone who does either of these things is just like a man who is bullheaded, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues anytime someone disagrees with him ^{<a fool>}.

¹⁹ If you talk too much, sooner or later you will end up saying something that is wrong, untrue, downright sinful, or hurtful to someone else. There is no way to avoid doing this if you talk substantially more than you listen. On the other hand, if you are quick to listen, slow to talk, and choose your words carefully you will show the world that you are a prudent man. They will see that you know exactly what to say exactly

when it needs to be said. By all means listen first, and then think about what you are going to say before you say it.

²⁰ Words spoken by a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} are worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox. On the other hand, the heart of a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} isn't worth its weight in salt because his mind, will, and emotions are totally committed to doing another evil deed.

²¹ Words spoken by a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} encourage, edify, and strengthen lots and lots of people. On the other hand, fools are bullheaded, despise wisdom, laugh at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argue whenever someone disagrees with them. They don't mind telling you they feel this way either. Because of their words and deeds they will most likely experience a premature death. This will happen to them because they have absolutely no concept of the knowledge, understanding, and self-discipline they would need in order to make really good choices based upon sound, godly morals.

²² It is the LORD's blessing that enables a man to be prosperous and gain wealth. When a wealthy man understands that everything he possesses belongs to the LORD and that he didn't gain all of those things by his own power or abilities, a deep joy fills his heart. Because of this knowledge, he understands that he is merely a steward of the LORD's money. This is a great place to be because there are no hurts, heartaches, pain, or anguish in this kind of ownership of wealth.

²³ Planning and carrying out deeds that are illegal, illicit, unethical, or downright hurtful to others are like a fun game for the man who is simple-minded, ignorant, arrogant, and unteachable because he is bullheaded ^{<a fool>}. In fact, he not only thinks it is fun, but he revels in doing these things. In a somewhat similar manner, using skillful planning, administering wisely, showing shrewdness in every interaction with others, practicing prudence in spiritual matters, and using good ethics ^{<wisdom>} is like a fun game to the man who possesses real, godly understanding.

²⁴ Since wicked men are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds, the retribution they fear will come back upon them from those they have wronged. Then too, the punishment they fear they might receive from law enforcement and the courts will be exactly what will come back upon them to destroy their lives and in many cases cause their premature death. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} seeks only good things. Therefore, God will see that the desires of his heart will come to pass because they will be the same things God wants for him.

(Note: Wicked men experience their fears—Righteous men experience their hopes.)

²⁵ When the disastrous results of his sin finally catch up with a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}, a tornado of troubles, hurts, heartaches, and misery will bring about his premature death. In the end, both his name and his reputation will vanish into thin air. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will always find that the results of his godly lifestyle produce safety and security both in this life and in the life to come.

²⁶ It is really irritating when vinegar comes into contact with your teeth or when smoke gets into your eyes. It is equally as irritating to send a lazy man to do a job. He will let you down every time. Yes, he will disappoint you, and you'll end up wanting to wring his neck.

²⁷ A genuine fear of the LORD prompts you to do good in order to please your heavenly Father, and it prompts you to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that your fellowship with the LORD will not be broken. Living in this manner results in a long and productive life. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} won't live as long as the godly man. More often than not, he will experience a premature death.

²⁸ Because of his faith in a loving and caring heavenly Father, the hopes of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will be fulfilled, and he will experience joy and happiness. On the other hand, all of the things a wicked man hopes to receive or accomplish ^{<expectations>} will someday vaporize into thin air. In the end, all of the things he had expected to gain will go up in smoke as a result of the way he is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds.

²⁹ A man who adheres to Biblical morals and does what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>} also seeks direction and guidance from the LORD. This man's manner of living and trust in the LORD will always result in the kind of safety and security that is better than the most well-fortified fortress. On the other hand, those who do perverted or distorted things that cause hurts, heartaches, pain or suffering for others ^{<iniquity>} will end up terrified as the results of their wicked lifestyle come crashing down upon their heads to destroy them. In a figurative sense, they will crash and burn.

³⁰ The faith and confidence of a man who has trusted in Jesus Christ by faith alone and lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} will never slip, teeter, or be destroyed. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} will not be able to live a peaceful, contented, and long life. He will always be looking over his shoulder for fear of being caught by law enforcement or being hurt or killed by someone he has hurt, wronged, or made sorrowful in the past. In the end, he will either be run out of town or destroyed.

³¹ The mouth ^{<the lips>} of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} gushes forth with words that convey skill in making the best decisions that produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<wisdom>}. On the other hand, words spoken by a man who rejects biblical morals in order to practice twisted or perverted thoughts and deeds will result in severe punishment and pain. Therefore, choose your words carefully.

³² The mouth of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} always flows with words that are good, right, and pleasant in the sight of moral, godly men and women. On the other hand, words spoken by a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} are perverted in that they either propagate a sinful lifestyle or seek to hide an intent to do more perverted deeds.

Chapter 11

^{11:1} It is a crime to make business transactions using a scale or measuring device that you know is inaccurate or has been purposely altered in order to give the customer less than what he should receive. The LORD hates this kind of thing. Don't think you can get away with it either because He is watching. On the other hand, a calibrated scale or measuring device that gives the customer exactly what he paid for is something that gives the LORD great pleasure.

² Pride drives a man to feel he is better, more able, and more deserving than those around him, and a truly proud man will express his feeling of self-worth in an insulting and overbearing manner. When this kind of pride enters a man's heart it isn't long before he is shamed or disgraced as a result. On the other hand, a humble man is gentle, patient, does not boast about what he is or what he has accomplished. He also gives credit where credit is due. Because of his humble spirit he possesses both the knowledge and the skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>}.¹ Conducting himself in this manner shows real, lasting wisdom.

³ When men maintain such a sound moral, legal, and spiritual fabric that there are no weaknesses which would easily entice them to choose to engage in some sinful practice ^{<integrity>}, their integrity will give them trustworthy direction as they do what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>}. This manner of living will guide them safely through all of the opportunities and challenges they will face in life. On the other hand, the dishonest, illegal, or unethical dealings ^{<crookedness>} of those who are disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful ^{<treacherous (dd)>} will generate tragic results. Sooner or later the consequences of their actions will come crashing down upon their heads to destroy their lives and possibly cause their premature death.

⁴ Vast amounts of money, possessions, or investments are of no help when things get so bad that a man is about to die or finds that his life has been turned into an absolute disaster. On the other hand, trusting the LORD and faithfully living according to sound biblical morals ^{<righteousness>} continually rescues the doer from an early grave.

⁵ Trusting the LORD and faithfully living according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>} is the primary thing that enables a man to live such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing ^{<blameless>}. This kind of godly living gives him the ability to maneuver the hard knocks of life untroubled and experience a deep-seated joy at the same time. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} will someday reap the consequences of his sinful actions. Yes, his own sins will be the very things that will generate severe punishment for him and possibly bring about his premature death.

⁶ An upright man always tries to do what is right in the sight of the LORD. Trusting the LORD and faithfully living according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>} are the very things that will rescue him from the hurts, heartaches, or premature death wicked men experience as a result of their sin. On the other hand, a treacherous man is disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful. His own greed will be the very thing that drives him to do things that will result in personal loss, punishment, and possibly a premature death. Yes, he will be caught and held in the grip of his own sin with no way out except to pay the penalty in full.

⁷ When a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} dies, everything he had hoped to gain, and everything other evil men had hoped to gain through him, will vanish into thin air. In the end, all of his energies will have been exerted for nothing.

⁸ Trusting the LORD and faithfully living according to sound, biblical morals ^{<righteousness>} continually saves the doer from the kind of hurts, heartaches, and troubles evil people experience as a result of their sinful lifestyle. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} is not so fortunate. Here's why: The righteous man merely steps aside and lets wicked men endure the results of their sinful thoughts and deeds. The closest a righteous man will ever come to experiencing such troubles is to watch it take its toll on worldly, ungodly men and women.

⁹ By claiming to be religious and living like the devil, a hypocrite destroys his neighbor's faith in the LORD and condemns him to a devil's hell. His hypocrisy gives those around him a viable reason to say, "If this man is what it is like to be a Christian, I don't want any part of it." On the other hand, understanding the truth of the Scriptures continually rescues the man who trusts in the LORD and faithfully lives according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous >}. This man is a help to those seeking the truth because he has trusted Jesus Christ as his own personal savior from sin and practices living a Christ-like life.

¹⁰ Righteous men trust in the LORD and faithfully live according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>}. When they are rewarded for their godly lifestyle, the whole city shouts for joy. In a somewhat similar manner, people shout for joy when wicked men and women are blotted off the face of the earth and are no longer around to be hostile toward God and guilty of more illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}.

¹¹ A city rises to a high and lofty status as a result of the blessing and prosperity generated by those who live in a manner that is pleasing to the LORD ^{<the upright>}. On the other hand, a city is pulled apart and destroyed by the ungodly, demoralizing speech of those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}. These evil people have no qualms about completely destroying a city if that's what it takes to satisfy their selfish greed.

¹² A man who harbors hard feelings against his neighbor and shows it by open hostility and disrespect has no concept of the difficulties his actions will bring back upon him. Acting in this manner shows that he does not have good sense. On the other hand, a man who understands the results of such actions will keep his thoughts to himself. He would never make an open show of hostility toward another man as a result of a real or even a perceived hurt. He is more patient than that.

¹³ Anyone who shares things about his neighbor that are confidential and should be kept secret is a talebearer and a busybody. Sharing such secrets with people who are not part of the problem or part of the solution is dead wrong. You cannot trust anyone who does this. On the other hand, anyone who keeps a secret to himself and will not share it with people who are not part of the problem or part of the solution is a person you can trust.

¹⁴ When there is no one to give folks sound, wise, godly advice, people will wander off into all sorts of sinful and unwise practices. In the end, they will make a mess of their lives and their future. On the other hand, with the help of lots and lots of wise, godly counselors, victory is just around the corner. These wise men will rescue many people from the disaster that awaits those who do not have access to good counsel.

¹⁵ If you are stupid enough to cosign a contract stating that you agree to be held responsible for the debt of someone you don't know, there may be severe consequences. There is a good chance that he will default on his loan, and you will be left having to pay the debt in full from your own funds. This is extremely foolish. On the other hand, the finances of a man who resolutely refuses to co-sign for anyone are secure. He won't lose his money because some lazy bum won't pay back what he owes. A wise man simply will not co-sign for anyone – period! Case closed.

¹⁶ A woman who is kind and compassionate and who looks, acts, and talks like a real lady will become and remain a woman of honor, dignity, and inward beauty. This is the normal and natural result of such godly conduct. Then there are those who are merciless and cruel. They will use intimidation to extract money or possessions from weaker people. They will acquire wealth in the process, but they may also experience a premature death along the way. This is the normal and natural result of such wicked actions.

¹⁷ A man who has a deep sympathy for the hurts and heartaches of another accompanied by a strong desire to be of help <merciful (dd)> not only meets another's need, but helps himself in the process. You see, as a result of his kind deeds, God will see that there is always someone there to help him when a need arises in his own life. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way. On the other hand, a cruel man hurts everyone around him. Because of his wicked conduct, the results of his evil deeds will sooner or later come crashing down upon his own head to hurt him in a manner similar to what he used to hurt others. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way too.

¹⁸ Those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds <the wicked> get a return on their investment in this life. They may think they are receiving good things in return for their evil deeds, but in reality they are setting themselves up for a major disaster. Sooner or later their life will come crashing down in ashes, and all of things they had worked so hard to gain through their wicked practices will have been in vain. On the other hand, those who faithfully live according to sound, biblical morals and godly principles try their best to consistently do good deeds. As a result, they will reap lots of blessings in this life and in the life to come. This makes life really worth living.

¹⁹ A man will experience life at its best once he has made up his mind that he will always live according to sound biblical morals and godly principles. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way. On the other hand, a man who gives himself over to the pursuit of worldly, wicked thoughts and deeds will one day find out that the consequences of his actions will most likely bring about his premature death. Be assured that the principle of sow and reap works this way too.

²⁰ Those who follow twisted and distorted morals and believe in their heart that it is ok to do so are absolutely disgusting in the sight of the LORD Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a man who lives such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing <blameless> thrills the heart of God. The LORD finds great pleasure in watching a man like this.

²¹ An evil man causes sorrow, distress, and/or difficulties for others. No matter how hard he tries to avoid it, he will not escape the punishment due his sin. This is the normal and natural result of such sinful practices. Even if he does escape punishment before he dies, he will still have to stand before God to be

judged, pronounced guilty, and cast into a devil's hell. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} sets such a good example for his children that they too will learn to live a good and godly lifestyle. As a result, they will be saved from the punishment evil men experience as a result of their sin.

²² If a beautiful woman lacks the understanding, discretion, and self-discipline to make good decisions based upon sound biblical morals and good understanding, then her beauty is as wasted as putting a shiny gold ring in the nose of a hog. As soon as the hog is released into his pen he will run for the nearest mud puddle where he will dirty the gold ring. In a similar manner, a beautiful woman without discretion will quickly make a poor decision or do something that will tarnish her reputation. Doing so will cause good men to look down upon her with disgust in spite of her physical beauty

²³ The hopes, the longings, and the desires of a man who trusts in the LORD and faithfully lives according to sound biblical morals ^{<righteous>} are always good, pleasant, and agreeable. On the other hand, a wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. The things he hopes to gain or experience as a result of his evil actions will be an exercise in futility. The only thing he can be sure of getting in return is the anger and wrath of his victims or punishment by law enforcement. In the end he will be required to pay dearly for his sin.

²⁴ There is a kind of man who is generous with what he possess. He freely gives to those in need, and yet he seems to prosper all the more. The LORD blesses a man like this, but there are others who are stingy. They will keep back what another person rightly deserves, and they will not share with those in need. Someday he will need help, but there will be no one there to help him.

²⁵ A man who regularly gives out of his material possessions to those who have real needs will prosper materially all the more, and the man who gives in order to satisfy the needs of others will find that the LORD will always satisfy his needs .

²⁶ People will talk badly about a man who has a bumper crop of grain and is greedy enough to hoard it all for himself. On the other hand, people will talk kindly about a man who has a bumper crop and has enough concern for others to sell most of it to those who need it.

²⁷ A man who carefully and regularly looks for opportunities to do good to and for other people is actually looking for opportunities to receive praise and thanks in return. On the other hand, a man who regularly looks for opportunities to cause sorrows, distresses, or difficulties for others will find that in the end he will become the victim when some other evil man hunts him down and forces him to experience the same kind of sorrows, distresses, or difficulties he has forced upon others.

²⁸ A man who trusts in his wealth, possessions, or social status to save him from every hurt or heartache of life will in time discover that all of those things will fail him. In the end, he will fall from his elevated perch and be devastated when he must die like every other man. On the other hand, the man who trusts in the LORD Jesus Christ and faithfully lives according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>} will blossom and flourish like a well-watered tree in the springtime.

²⁹ A man who causes all sorts of fights, arguments, and disagreements within his own home will end up destroying his home. In the end, he will be no more able to hold his family together than he would be able to hold the wind in his hand. In a somewhat similar manner, a man who despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, argues anytime anyone disagrees with him, and is bull-headed ^{<the foolish>} will suffer loss too. Because of his perverted approach to life, he will do stupid and senseless things that will end up causing him to become a servant to the man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise-hearted>} .¹

³⁰ The reward for trusting the LORD and faithfully living according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>} is a life that just keeps getting better and better. In addition, a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise>} .¹ is actively involved in trying to persuade the lost to trust in Jesus Christ as their own personal savior.

³¹ Every man who trusts in the LORD and faithfully lives according to sound biblical morals ^{<the righteous>} will be rewarded with blessings from the LORD in this life. As certain as this truth is, it is even more certain that in this life 1) the man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} and 2) the man who disregards God's moral standards to go his own way so that he can enjoy his sin ^{<the sinner>} will be punished for their sin in this life.

Chapter 12

¹ Any man who really appreciates the value of being taught, corrected, or called down for his own good ^{<discipline>} loves to gain and retain the kind of trustworthy knowledge that is the foundation upon which wisdom is built. On the other hand, a man who hates to have someone teach, correct, or punish him for his own good ^{<reproof>} is sensual, lacks normal intelligence, and lacks understanding ^{<stupid (dd)>}.

² When a man does what is right and interacts with others in a good, pleasant, and agreeable manner, the LORD Jesus Himself will cause others to look upon that man with pleasure, acceptance, and good will. On the other hand, the LORD Jesus will pronounce guilty and condemn to a devil' hell those who make a practice of dreaming up and carrying out evil deeds.

³ A man will not find stability or security by planning and carrying out acts of violence against individuals or against the government. On the other hand, the foundation of the stability and security experienced by a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful life ^{<the righteous>} is his faith and godly living. Nothing will be able to shake his faith in the LORD because he trusts in God and his Word.

⁴ An excellent wife is a woman of faith, strength, ability, efficiency, and sound moral fabric, and she is always there to support and encourage her husband. A wife like this is the one thing above everything else that makes a husband stand out as being a fortunate, happy, and blessed man. On the other hand, a woman who acts in a shameful manner disgraces her husband in the eyes of the community. She is as devastating to him as a terminal disease. She simply eats away at his life and emotions like an aggressive cancer.

⁵ All of the thoughts that run through the mind of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} are the kind that would hold up well if tried by a court of law to determine whether they were good, right, and wholesome. On the other hand, advice, suggestions, and direction offered by a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} cannot be trusted. He will encourage you to use deceit or suggest that you betray the trust of another if that is what it takes to get what you want. Advice like this can only lead to disaster.

⁶ A wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. When he talks it is only for the purpose of sharing how he plans to ambush another innocent victim, take his life, and rob him of whatever monies or possessions he desires to steal. On the other hand, words spoken by a man who does what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<the upright>} will rescue those unfortunate people from the wicked man's grasp.

⁷ Those who are hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} will experience a premature death, and both their person and their reputation will vanish, never to be heard of again. On the other hand, the home of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will stand the test of time. It will endure for generations to come.

⁸ People will praise and boast about a man based upon how well he uses knowledge, understanding, insight, and good sense. A man like this is certainly worthy of praise. On the other hand, when good people see a man who has made up his mind to follow twisted or distorted morals, they can't stand to be around him. They find him totally disgusting.

⁹ A man who is a nobody in the community yet has an employee on his payroll is much better off than a man who claims to be somebody important and in good financial shape when in reality he doesn't have enough money to buy a loaf of bread for his next meal.

¹⁰ A man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} values his animals and does his best to give them all the care and kindness they need. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} is so cruel at heart that even what he feels is kindness toward his animals is still cruelty in the eyes of the average person.

¹¹ A man who plows his land, plants seed, and cares for it will harvest enough produce to meet his needs and some left over to sell. On the other hand, a man who pours all of his energies into some get-rich-quick scheme or a venture that is of no lasting value shows that he doesn't have the sense he was born with.

¹² Wicked men are hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, and/or unethical thoughts and deeds. They are greedy and never seem to be satisfied. So, it is not unusual for them to earnestly desire to acquire for themselves the empire and wealth that other evil men have gained through intimidating others and inflicting innocent people with injury, misery, and calamity. On the other hand, the prominent thing about a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} is the reward he receives as a result of his of godly living. Since all of his needs are met in full by the LORD, he has no reason to desire what his neighbor possess. In fact, his goal is to give of himself and his possessions to help others.

¹³ An evil man gains his wealth and power by intimidating other people and inflicting injury, misery, and/or calamity upon innocent people. Because he likes to brag about what he has done in the past or what he plans to do in the future, in time the right person will hear about his crimes, and he will be arrested and convicted. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will be spared all of the hurts, heartaches, and losses the wicked man endures as a result of his sinful lifestyle.

¹⁴ A man will be fully satisfied with the good, pleasant, and agreeable things that come back upon him as a result of the good, encouraging, and edifying words he speaks. In like manner, the deeds a man does will someday come back to him in a similar fashion. If he has done good, others will do good to him, but if he has done evil, others will do evil to him in return. The principle of sow and reap almost always works this way.

¹⁵ A fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. Because he is totally satisfied with his approach to life and his manner of living, he is convinced that it must be OK. This is a foolish conclusion, but there is a better way to live. A son who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>}₁ knows that he is always better off listening to sound, godly counsel and then doing what he is advised.

¹⁶ The anger, grief, and frustration of a man who is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him ^{<a fool>} is apparent the instant he is put down, berated, or confronted about his sin. He'll fly off the handle at the slightest provocation and attempt to justify his actions. On the other hand, a prudent man is one who carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that will produce good and beneficial results. When he is corrected, called down, or pronounced guilty of doing something wrong, he will keep his disgrace to himself instead of trying to justify his actions.

¹⁷ When a man who always tells the truth is called upon to be a witness in a court of law, he will give an accurate and reliable testimony of what he actually saw or heard. You can bank on it. On the other hand, you simply cannot trust a liar. He will always tell his side of the story in a distorted way in an attempt to make it come out to his advantage. He couldn't care less about seeing that justice is served.

¹⁸ There are people who will say whatever comes to mind. Their words are rash, cutting, and destructive, and such words can cause irreparable damage to those who listen or to those about whom the careless man speaks. Unfortunately, these uncaring people couldn't care less who they hurt. On the other hand, there are people who are moral men and possess the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>}₁. When they talk, they speak words that are encouraging, edifying, and comforting. Such words help folks get through troubled times and bring healing to those with broken hearts.

¹⁹ You can rely upon statements that are true, accurate, and reliable. In fact, you can depend on them as long as you live—for eternity for that matter. On the other hand, lies and those who say them are here for a moment, and then they vanish into obscurity. They are worthless. You cannot depend on them.

²⁰ Everything within a man who plans and carries out deeds that cause untold hurts, heartaches, misery, and/or calamity for innocent people ^{<evil>} is always ready to take advantage of others by violating an allegiance or taking advantage of the confidence other people have placed in him ^{<deceit (dd)>}. This kind of man is constantly trying to cover up his evil deeds to avoid being caught by the authorities or those he has wronged. On the other hand, people who give counsel and advice that is sound, reliable, and comforting are happy when they see it bring peace to those they have counseled.

²¹ Those who live in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will never have to endure the kind of hurts, heartaches, and troubles wicked men and women experience as a result of their sinful lifestyle. Instead, they will receive only blessings in return for their good and godly manner of living. On the other hand, those who are hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} must endure one injury, heartache, or disaster after another as a result of their wicked lifestyle. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way.

²² A habitual liar is absolutely disgusting in the eyes of the LORD, but it thrills His heart to see people interact with others in an honest, trustworthy, and dependable manner.

²³ A prudent man carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. When a decision will produce good and beneficial results he will proceed. When it will produce undesirable or costly consequences he will refrain. When he hears something detrimental about another person, he will not blab it all over town. Instead, he has the knowledge and understanding to keep it to himself. On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. When he hears something detrimental about another person, everything within him simply cannot wait to tell his juicy morsel of gossip to anyone he meets. The results of his evil deeds only serve to add additional hurts and heartaches for the one being discussed. In addition, he adds one more blot on his own reputation as a fool because of the stupid, mischievous, and costly things he does ^{<folly>}.

²⁴ A man who is hard-working, meticulous, and dependable will rise to the top of the organizational structure in his company. On the other hand, a lazy man either works in a sloppy, “I don’t care” manner, or tries to find ways to get out of work. Because he does such a poor job and is totally undependable, he will end up doing the most menial and undesirable tasks at the lowest pay.

²⁵ Fretting about what someone has said about you or about what the future might bring your way makes your whole inner being depressed about things over which you have no control. This is inappropriate for a believer, but some people have actually made themselves sick worrying like this. On the other hand, when someone shares things with you that are good, pleasant, and agreeable, those kinds of words lift your spirit and give you good reason to be glad in your heart.

²⁶ A man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} constantly explores new and better ways to be a help and guide to those who don’t know which way to turn in life. On the other hand, the path through life and the manner of living of a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} steers good people off the right path of life. Those who follow his advice or example will wander aimlessly through life and never experience life at its best.

²⁷ A truly lazy man won’t even go to the work of warming his food in the microwave. How much lazier can a man get? On the other hand, the most prized possession of a man who is hard-working, meticulous, and dependable is his drive to finish the job no matter how difficult or involved the task may be.

²⁸ Faithfully living according to sound biblical morals and godly principles ^{<righteousness>} is the way to experience life at its very best, and this kind of living produces a life that is free from the harsh and sometimes premature death wicked men experience as a result of their sinful lifestyle.

Chapter 13

¹ A son who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise son>}¹ not only listens carefully to what his father has to say when he teaches, corrects, or calls him down for his own good, but he responds appropriately. On the other hand, a son who despises and/or treats with contempt both the LORD and all who try to live godly ^{<scoffer>} simply will not listen when sharply criticized or shown strong disapproval. So, for all practical purposes he is beyond hope.

² A good man will only say things that are good, right, edifying, and acceptable. Because he is so careful about what he says and how he says it, he will enjoy good, right, and acceptable things in return. On the other hand, the driving passion of a man who is disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful ^{<treacherous (dd)>} is to come up with more and more ways of using physical force to do wrong, cruel, or unjust things to innocent people ^{<violence (dd)>}. As a result of his violent behavior, he will receive the same kind of treatment in return from those he has hurt or offended. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way. In fact, the principle of sow and reap is equally as true for good men as it is for evil men.

³ A man who stands guard over his mouth and is extremely careful about what he says, when he says it, and to whom he says it will ultimately save his life from destruction and an early grave. On the other hand, anyone who opens his mouth to say whatever comes to mind without considering the consequences of his statements will be terrified at the devastating results that will come back upon him. His own words may literally destroy his life, his well-being, and his future.

⁴ A lazy man is greedy, and his whole inner being is consumed with a desire to have the same things working people acquire through hard work. Oh, but since he is unwilling to work, he will go without and end up with nothing. On the other hand, a man who is careful, diligent, and thorough in his work will become a well-to-do man, and in the end he will be fully satisfied with all he has acquired through his hard work.

⁵ A man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} hates deception, and lies. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, and/or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} thrives upon deception and lies. So, because he acts and talks this way, he will not only bring shame upon himself and his family, but he will also cause good people to look down upon him with disgust and contempt.

⁶ Faithfully living according to sound biblical morals and godly principles ^{<righteousness>} is the primary thing that guards and protects with fidelity the course through life of a man who does what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>}. On the other hand, being hostile toward God and doing things that make a man guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wickedness>} undermines the morals, faith, and allegiance of those who are guilty and deserve to be punished ^{<the sinner>}.

⁷ There are people who give the impression that they are wealthy when in reality they are as poor as a church mouse. Then there are others who have a great deal of wealth, but they live in a way that gives the impression that they barely have enough to get along. Both types of people are being deceptive.

⁸ When a wealthy man is caught in a situation where he is facing disaster or death, he will spend every dollar he owns in an attempt to try to buy his way out of the situation. On the other hand, a poor man has no funds available to buy his way out of a difficult situation. So, he merely tells his captors, "Go take a hike. I have nothing to give you, so if you kill me you gain nothing."

⁹ Great understanding and insight coupled with discernment ^{<the light>} shines as brightly as the noonday sun in the life of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>}. Possessing this kind of understanding causes the righteous man to be thrilled deep down in his soul. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, and/or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} does not view godly knowledge the same way. For him, understanding and insight coupled with discernment ^{<the light>} are as hard to find as trying to see a small candle ^{<the lamp>} in the sunlight. It isn't long before the little bit of light (truth) he does have is gone and leaves him completely in the dark.

¹⁰ People who are proud and arrogant not only assert their own self-worth in an overbearing manner, but they are insulting and rude when they interact with others <insolence (dd)>. This kind of conduct only leads to all sorts of arguments, fights, and disagreements. On the other hand, those who listen to and follow wise, godly counsel act differently. They possess both the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live <wisdom>.¹ Therefore, they treat others like they deserve to be treated.

¹¹ Money, securities, and/or possessions obtained by intentionally perverting the truth in order to induce another to part with something of value <fraud (dd)> are not permanent. They will dwindle away, and before you know it they will be gone. On the other hand, money, securities, and/or possessions obtained by faithfully working hard, smart, and diligently coupled with wise spending and saving will not only last a long time but will actually grow larger and larger with time.

¹² Seeing your longings and desires actually come to pass will revive and invigorate your whole inner being <the heart>, and these are some of the sweetest experiences of life. On the other hand, when you greatly anticipate a certain thing and it never happens, you will end up feeling sick all over.

¹³ A man who looks down upon the Word of God with contempt is building a debt that he can never repay. As a result, someday he will stand before the LORD in judgment and will be devastated when he is pronounced guilty and condemned to a devil's hell. On the other hand, a man who respects and obeys what the Bible teaches and by faith receives Jesus Christ as his personal Savior from sin will be reward with good in this life and in the life to come.

¹⁴ Instruction, direction, and advice given by a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live <the wise>¹ are a real source of joy, refreshment, and renewed vitality. Following his advice will enlighten your heart and mind so that you will have the discernment to avoid the things that would otherwise trap you in your sin and take its toll on your health, your home, and your possessions. It is quite possible that if you fail to follow his advice, the detrimental things you do could end up causing your premature death.

¹⁵ Maintaining good understanding, insight, discernment, and plain old good sense will cause others to look upon you with favor, acceptance, and good will. On the other hand, the manner of living maintained by a man who is disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful <treacherous (dd)> hurts and offends people all around him. As a result of his sinful choices, he will experience all sorts of hurts, heartaches, and losses. Life for a man like this will be extremely hard.

¹⁶ Every man who carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that produce good and beneficial results thinks and acts with the kind of sound knowledge, understanding, and discernment that are the foundation upon which wisdom is built. On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. The things he does are stupid, foolish, and ignorant, and by doing them he shows the world the detrimental results of his ignorance, stupidity, and lack of discernment <folly>.

¹⁷ If you send an important message by the hand of a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, and/or unethical thoughts and deeds <wicked messenger> it is quite likely that he will get into some sort of trouble on the way. In addition, the message may not get to the recipient or it may be distorted when it gets there. On the other hand, sending a message by the hand of a man who has demonstrated that he will do exactly as he has promised will result in pleasure, satisfaction, and relief on the part of those who send the message and those who receive it.

¹⁸ Poverty and disgrace will find a home in the life of any man who doesn't pay attention to or simply refuses to accept a wise man's help when he tries to teach, correct, or call him down for his own good. On the other hand, a man who accepts, values, and responds appropriately when a wise man tries to discipline, correct, or call him down for his own good will end up being honored as a wise man himself.

¹⁹ It is such a sweet experience to watch your longings and desires happen just like you hoped they would, and each time something like this happens your whole inner being is refreshed and invigorated.

On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. He hates the very idea of giving up any of the evil things he likes to do even though doing them will generate all kinds of hurts, heartaches, injury, and/or calamity for him and for everyone around him.

²⁰ A man whose closest companions have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise men>}₁ will someday become wise like his friends. As a result of his association with them, he too will gain the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<be wise>}₁.¹ On the other hand, the close friends of those who are proud, bull-headed, practice ungodly morals, and are unteachable because they are simple-minded and ignorant ^{<fools>} will experience a boat load of troubles and may end up being completely destroyed. This is a good reason to choose good and godly friends.

²¹ Distress, hard times, and all sorts of disasters will come back upon a man who is guilty of sinning against God and men on a regular basis. These things will not only find him, but they will hunt him down like a professional hunter pursues his quarry. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will experience life at its best. As a result of his good and godly lifestyle he will always have enough to meet his needs, and he will be rewarded with experiences and relationships that are good, agreeable, and pleasant².

²² A man who is good, pleasant, agreeable and treats others like they deserve cares about the future of his family. So, he will work hard and save in order to leave a respectable inheritance for his children to pass on to their children. On the other hand, a man who disregards God's moral standards to go his own way and enjoy his sin will use a great deal of his energies trying to amass vast sums of money and possessions. The problem for him, though, is that without knowing it, one day God will take it all away from him and give it to someone who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>}.

²³ If a poor farmer will plow, plant, and harvest crops in ground that would otherwise have been allowed to lie dormant during the growing season, his crop will produce enough food for his family to live on and enough left over to sell. The problem is that in many cases the profit a poor man would gain from such a venture is snatched away from him by some unscrupulous person in an illegal, illicit, or unethical way. Invariably, there always seems to be one more ungodly man waiting to take unfair advantage of weaker men.

²⁴ A parent who will not discipline his child or spank him in love when he needs it does not love his child. He may think he does, but when his child grows up to be a reprobate, he will learn that he didn't love his son like he thought he did. On the other hand, a parent who disciplines, teaches, or spansks his son in love every time he needs it loves his child. He knows that disciplining his child immediately and in love is the only way to help him grow up to be a good and godly man or woman.

²⁵ A righteous man lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner. The LORD will always see that he has enough to eat. On the other hand, those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, and/or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} will go hungry because they won't have what they need. Their lack is a direct result of their sinful, ungodly lifestyle.

Chapter 14

¹ Every woman who possesses the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended her to live ^{<wise woman>}₁ works hard at making her home and family the best they can possibly be. Everything she does in and around her home is done for this purpose (see Proverbs 31:10-31). On the other hand, a woman who is proud, bull-headed, and unteachable acts and reacts in a stupid and senseless way with tragic results ^{<the foolish>}. Because of her destructive manner of living she tears down, picks apart, and destroys her home. Pity the husband or children who must live in a home like this.

² A man who does what is pleasing in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>} as a normal manner of living does so because he has a proper perspective of the power and greatness of the LORD. His high regard for Christ

and all that He has done for us on the cross of Calvary drives him to do good so that he can please his heavenly father. It causes him to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that his heavenly Father will not have to punish him. On the contrary, a man who gets off course and takes a crooked path through life has nothing but contempt for the LORD. He wants nothing whatsoever to do with Him.

³ A foolish man is not only void of wisdom, but he despises the very thought of being self-disciplined enough to become a wise man. He lacks moral and legal restraints, argues with anyone who disagrees with him, and degrades and ridicules anyone who would dare tell him he is guilty of some moral or legal offense. When a man like this speaks, his words mirror his beliefs, and those words are the very things that will generate severe punishment for him in return. On the other hand, words spoken by a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>¹} will be the very things that will come to his defense and protect him from danger or prosecution. They may even save his life someday.

⁴ When you don't have farm equipment cluttering your barn, it is easy to keep it clean and neat, but having access to those pieces of equipment will enable you to realize a much greater profit by doing a lot more work in a shorter period of time. It is well worth the clutter in trade for the added income they will generate.

⁵ A man who always tells the truth will not lie when he takes the witness stand to tell what he has seen or heard. You can bank on it. On the other hand, a man who makes lying and deception a normal practice of life will lie when he takes the stand. You can bank on the fact that he will give a distorted view of the truth. He wants to make sure that the outcome will be to his advantage or to the advantage of his friend. He couldn't care less about preserving the truth or seeing that an innocent man receives the justice he deserves.

⁶ A scoffer is a proud man. He aggressively and sometimes brutally mocks the Word of God and those who try to live godly. When he tries to gain wisdom, he goes away empty-handed because he can never learn wisdom as long as he maintains an attitude diametrically opposed to the truth. On the other hand, 1) possessing knowledge, understanding, and discernment, and 2) being able to use them properly in order to produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<both 1 & 2 comprise knowledge>} comes easy for the man who believes the Word of God and already has some understanding, insight, and discernment.

⁷ A fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. Stay away from a man like this, and don't spend time with him. In fact, don't befriend him or allow him to become a close companion because if you do, you will end up being just like him. In the end, you will forfeit any ability to see and know by experience the knowledge and understanding that leads to real wisdom.

⁸ A sensible (prudent) man is one who carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that produce good and beneficial results. You see, being able to plan skillfully, administer wisely, make shrewd business dealings, be prudent in spiritual matters, and use good ethics in all of his dealings with others ^{<wisdom>} is what gives a sensible man the ability to use good understanding, insight, discernment, and perception in order to recognize where life is taking him. Armed with these tools, he will choose to adopt and maintain a godly manner of living. On the other hand, the stupid, mischievous, and costly things ^{<the foolishness>} done by a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>} are the product of being deceitful and maintaining a lack of allegiance to anyone or anything.

⁹ A fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. He will ridicule and belittle the very idea of sin and those who try to avoid it. On the other hand, a man who does what is pleasing in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>} acts in a manner that produces good, pleasant, and welcome responses from those around him.

This one is for Danny Fennell and Randy Pike

¹⁰ Everything within a man who is experiencing a trial of pain, suffering, or anguish is fully aware of how difficult the whole situation is to endure. While he knows the difficulty by experience, someone else who has not gone through the same trial simply cannot comprehend or participate in the joy this man possesses in spite of his pain and suffering. The LORD Jesus Christ gives this kind of deep-seated joy to those of His children who love and trust Him during extended difficult trials.

¹¹ The dwelling of a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds <the wicked> will be destroyed by the consequences of his sin. On the other hand, the home of a man who does what is pleasing in the sight of the LORD <upright> will blossom and flourish more and more as a result of his good and godly manner of living.

¹² There is an approach to life and eternity that says, "I can do whatever I want. I don't need to trust in Jesus Christ by faith alone in order to be saved from my sin. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, God will surely let me into heaven. I feel like what I am doing is OK, so I hope everything works out well for me in the end." This kind of thought process seems good to the uninformed, but the Bible teaches that this approach to God and life in general will ultimately end in shock and dismay when the man dies and is cast into a devil's hell.

¹³ Even though a man may be laughing and cutting up on the outside, he may be experiencing a great deal of pain and sorrow deep down in his soul. Then too, a man may experience a great deal of joy and contentment at a given moment, but in the end he may experience a great deal of emotional sadness because he is grieving on the inside. Sometimes life plays little tricks on us like that.

¹⁴ Some men have given themselves wholly over to fulfilling their fleshly, sensual desires because they have abandoned or completely forgotten the godly manner of living the Bible teaches <backslider>. In time, these men will become sick and tired of the hurts, heartaches, and disappointments that continually come back upon them as a result of their sinful lifestyle. On the other hand, a man who is good, pleasant, agreeable, treats people right, and is faithful to his LORD will be completely satisfied and at peace with the results of his good and godly manner of living.

¹⁵ A naïve man is gullible, believes almost anything he is told, and rarely evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. As a result, he makes many hurtful and costly choices. On the other hand, a prudent man carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that produce good and beneficial results. Consequently, he avoids the hurts and heartaches naïve men endure because of their poor choices.

¹⁶ A wise son has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live <wise man>.¹ Because he understands the adverse consequences of doing things that result in hurts, heartaches, injury, and/or calamity <evil> for others and himself, his fear of the LORD will drive him to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. On the other hand, a fool is simple-minded and ignorant. This is because he is proud, bull-headed, morally perverted, and unteachable. As a result, the fool exaggerates his own self-worth in an overbearing manner <arrogant (dd)>, and, since he always thinks he is right, he is totally unconcerned about the consequences of his actions even when they are explained to him.

¹⁷ A man who becomes angry at the slightest provocation says and does things that are foolish and stupid. Anyone watching him cannot mistake the fact that his lack of self-control is stupid, senseless, and destructive. Then too, good people will hate a man who dreams up and carries out wicked and hurtful deeds against innocent people.

¹⁸ A naïve man rarely evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. As a result, he does many stupid and foolish things. The detrimental repercussions from his actions show everyone around him that he is stupid and senseless. On the other hand, a prudent man carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that produce good and beneficial results. Consequently, he gains the distinction and honor of being known and respected for his

thorough grasp of the kind of sound knowledge, understanding, and discernment that are the foundation upon which wisdom is built.

¹⁹ People who inflict hurts, heartaches, injury, and/or calamity upon others ^{<evil>} will someday bow the knee in submission to those who consistently do what is right and live in a manner that is good, pleasant, and agreeable ^{<good>}. Then too, those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} will someday bow the knee in submission to those who live in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>}. When these events occur they will take place right in the center of town where everyone can see it happen.

²⁰ People who are so poor that they do not have enough money to meet their family's needs are despised by people in their neighborhood. Few, if any, want to be their friend. On the other hand, since a rich man has lots and lots of money, many people want to be his friend because they are greedy and think that they might get something from him. There always seems to be someone standing in line to help a rich man spend his money.

²¹ There is a kind of man who has nothing but contempt for his neighbor and makes an open show of it. A man like this is sinning by acting that way, and he will end up reaping the same kind of treatment in return. On the other hand, there is a kind of man who has compassion for those who have genuine financial needs, and he demonstrates his concern by being their friend and helping them financially when he is able. As a result, he himself will be rewarded with peace of mind and happiness.

²² There are people who dream up, plan, and perfect ways to carry out deeds that take advantage of innocent people by inflicting hurts, heartaches, injury, or calamity upon them ^{<evil>}. It is certain that everyone who takes part in these kinds of deeds will end up losing their way in life and experiencing similar hurts, heartaches, injury, or calamity at the hands of other evil people. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way. On the other hand, there are people who do what is right. They devise, plan, and perfect ways to carry out deeds that are good, pleasant, agreeable ^{<good>}. It is certain that everyone who takes part in these kinds of deeds will end up experiencing good things in return. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way too.

²³ There is some benefit in any work you do even if it involves pain, sorrow or hardship. On the other hand, simply talking about all the things you intend to do without actually doing any of them will ultimately lead you to the poor house.

²⁴ A wise man has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live.¹ The thing that makes him stand out above all of his peers is his wealth of knowledge, understanding, and discernment coupled with the financial wealth he possesses ^{<riches>}. On the other hand, a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>} is careless and does immature and senseless things ^{<folly>}. This man will waste his life by immersing himself in a continual quest to enjoy pleasures and do or say stupid, immature, or senseless things ^{<foolishness>}. As a result, any onlooker can tell at a glance that he is indeed a fool.

²⁵ An honest man makes a practice of telling the truth. He is committed to the truth, and you can depend upon him when the chips are down. When called upon to be a witness in a court of law he will accurately and honestly tell what he has seen or heard, and this kind of testimony can save the life of a man who is being charged with a crime he did not commit. On the other hand, when a habitual liar is called upon to be a witness in a court of law, he will always tell his side of the story in a perverted way in order to make it come out to his advantage. He cannot be trusted because he is disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful ^{<treacherous (dd)>}. He will act and react this way even if it means an innocent man is pronounced guilty of a crime he did not commit.

²⁶ A man who loves and fears the LORD Jesus Christ enough to do good and avoid or abandon every sinful practice has an unshakable trust and confidence in his God. He knows that the LORD will sustain and protect him. Because of his good and godly example, his children will learn to love, fear, and trust the

LORD like him. As a result, they will develop an unshakable trust and confidence in the LORD. They too will be filled with joy and experience unnumbered blessings just like their father.

²⁷ A man who loves and fears the LORD Jesus Christ enough to do good and avoid or abandon every sinful practice will enjoy a life that flows with one blessing after another. This makes life fresh, vibrant, and joyful. In fact, it just keeps getting better and better. This man's fear of the LORD continually rescues him from a premature and sometimes violent death. This is true because he chooses to avoid the trap of indulging in sinful practices knowing that the end of such a sinful lifestyle is always detrimental and costly.

²⁸ A ruler receives a great deal of praise and honor when lots and lots of his citizens support him. On the other hand, when there are but a handful of people supporting a ruler, his position of authority quickly falls apart, and it sometimes happens in a violent manner.

²⁹ A man who is patient and takes a lot of abuse before he becomes angry has a great deal of understanding. That is, he is shrewd in his dealings with others, practices prudence in spiritual matters, and uses good ethics in all of his dealings with men ^{<understanding>}. On the other hand, a man who flies off the handle at the slightest provocation promotes and exemplifies what it is like to do things that show ignorance, stupidity, and lack of discernment ^{<folly>}.

³⁰ Having and maintaining a peaceful and contented heart results in a refreshed, invigorated, and healthy body. On the other hand, jealousy, anger, envy, out-of-control sexual desires, or any other unhealthy passion wreaks havoc on the body. It will wear a person down, and sometimes it will make a physical or emotional wreck out of a man — maybe both. It may even cause his premature death.

³¹ When a man uses his power or authority in an abusive way in order to crush or mistreat people of a lower social status who do not have the means to defend themselves, he discredits and belittles the very God who made poor people. It is even worse when he does it in a mocking and insulting manner ^{<taunt (dd)>}. On the other hand, the LORD Jesus Christ receives praise and honor when a man interacts in a kind and gentle way with those who do not have enough money to meet their own needs. Treating them this way makes them feel perfectly comfortable in his presence and helps them see what a real Christian is like.

³² A man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds ^{<the wicked>} will receive punishment in return for his evil deeds. As a result of the pain, misery, distress, calamity, and/or suffering he forces upon innocent people, someday the consequences of his wicked deeds will ruin his life both now and for eternity too if he doesn't repent and trust in Jesus Christ by faith alone. On the other hand, a man who has trusted in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior by faith alone and lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} enjoys real safety and security in this life and in heaven when he dies.

³³ The ability to live and act by making the best choices that result in the best possible outcome in every area of life and practice ^{<wisdom>} saturates the whole inner being of a man who possesses and uses trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, accurate insight, and good discernment. On the other hand, the whole inner being of a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<fools>} drives him to do and say stupid and senseless things that distinguish him as a fool.

³⁴ Faithfully living according to sound biblical morals and godly principles is the primary thing that causes a country to rise to a lofty and favorable status in the world. On the other hand, it is a shame and disgrace for any nation when the majority of its people disregard the law and the Scriptures in order to do what is right in their own eyes.

³⁵ A man who has the knowledge and skill to make the best decisions that produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<wise man>} will carefully and consistently evaluate the consequences of any situation he encounters. A ruler or authority will welcome a man like this into his chambers and consider his service a real pleasure. On the other hand, a good ruler will be extremely upset with those who are guilty of breaking the law or acting in a way that would make a good man ashamed.

Chapter 15

¹ A soft-spoken answer given in a gentle way in response to someone else's harsh words de-escalates an argument that could otherwise turn into an all-out fight. On the other hand, loud, angry, and accusing words cause the other person to respond in a loud, angry, and accusing manner. The argument just keeps getting more and more heated until folks completely lose their tempers and engage in an all-out fight.

² A wise man has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live.¹ What he has to say is good, right, and pleasant to the ears of the listener and will help the listener to learn a knowledge of the truth and of God himself². On the other hand, the mouth of a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant^{<a fool>} gushes forth with words and ideas^{<folly>} that generate all kinds of stupid, senseless, immoral, and destructive actions that call for punishment. This kind of conduct confirms the fact that he is a fool.

³ The LORD Jesus Christ sees everything done by every individual on this planet no matter where or when it happens. He intently watches every good deed a man does, and he sees every time a man violates the Scriptures, breaks the law, or causes misery, pain, distress, calamity, and/or suffering for someone else. He records every one of these incidents in his book and will refer to them as evidence for or against men in the day of judgment.

⁴ Wholesome, gentle words spoken in a soft, caring manner revive and encourage the hearer and give him renewed strength and stamina. On the other hand, perverted, degrading, or cutting words shatter the hearer's inner peace and tranquility. They may actually cause him to be defeated and simply give up on life and the LORD.

⁵ Because a fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him will steadfastly refuse to accept and actually despise his father when he teaches, corrects, or calls him down for his own good. On the other hand, a son who not only listens carefully when his father tries to discipline, correct, or call him down for his own good^{<reproof>} but obeys what he is told is a sensible son. He is smart enough to carefully evaluate the consequences of each of his actions and proceed with only those that will produce good and beneficial results^{<prudent>}.

⁶ Sufficient quantities of money, investments, and/or possessions can be found in the house of a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner^{<the righteous>}. According to Solomon, this is one of the results of good and godly living. On the other hand, all who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds^{<the wicked>} are not rewarded the same as the righteous. The only things these wicked people will receive in return for their sinful lifestyle are hurts, heartaches, and disappointments in abundance.

⁷ A wise man has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live.¹ When he talks, he spreads knowledge of the truth and of God himself^{<knowledge>}.² In doing so he helps the listeners learn these same truths. On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. Everything he has to say emanates from a heart that is saturated with stupid, senseless, and immoral thoughts and desires. A fool can't help anyone learn the truth because he cannot share what he does not possess.

⁸ A wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. The LORD hates anything he does or gives up in hopes of finding favor with God. The only thing God will find pleasing about a wicked man is when he repents of his sins and trusts in Jesus Christ by faith alone to find forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, the LORD takes great pleasure in the prayers of a man who has received Christ as savior by faith alone and lives in a manner that is pleasing in the sight of the LORD^{<upright>}.

⁹ A wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. The LORD hates this man's immoral and ungodly manner of living. On the other hand, The LORD loves a man who pursues every opportunity to live in a good, just, right, and lawful manner^{<righteousness>}.

¹⁰ Some men reject or abandon living in a good, just, right, and lawful manner^{<the way>} in order to follow their own sinful passions. When they do, punishment so severe that a man can barely stand it waits just around the corner. Then too, a man who hates being disciplined, corrected, or called down for his own good^{<reproof>} will end up experiencing a premature and sometimes violent death.

¹¹ The LORD Jesus Christ sees and knows everyone who abides in hell and the grave, and He is familiar with everything that happens there. As intimately as He knows these things, he knows even more about the thoughts, motives, and deeds of everyone who has ever lived in the past, everyone who is alive today, and everyone who will live in the future.

¹² A scoffer is a proud man, and he aggressively and sometimes brutally mocks the Word of God and those who try to live godly. He has absolutely no love or appreciation for anyone who would correct, discipline, or call him down for his own good^{<reproves>}. In fact, he hates being corrected so much that he will steadfastly refuse to go to those who have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live^{<the wise>}, in order to ask for advice and counsel.

¹³ When a man is privileged to experience the wonderfully sweet emotions that accompany well-being, success, or good fortune it is obvious to even the most casual observer. Because he finds the experience so pleasurable, he can't help but smile. On the other hand, when a man experiences wave after wave of sorrow, misfortune, and/or turmoil, his whole inner being can be overcome by grief. When it does, his facial expressions will display the pain and grief he is experiencing on the inside.

¹⁴ Everything within a man who possesses the kind of sound understanding that comes from trustworthy knowledge constantly desires to discover more and more knowledge of the truth and of God Himself.² On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. What he has to say is driven by thoughts and desires born out of a heart that is filled to overflowing with ignorance, stupidity, and a lack of discernment^{<folly>}. The only things he desires to learn is more and better ways to engage in the stupid, senseless, and immoral things he loves to do.

¹⁵ Every day is a bad one for a man who is poor, needy, is going through difficult trials, or is enduring a great misfortune^{<afflicted (dd)>}. On the other hand, life is good, and each successive day keeps getting better and better for a man whose whole inner being is experiencing good, pleasant, and agreeable things.

¹⁶ It is much better to get along with meager finances accompanied by a genuine, biblical fear of the LORD than to be very wealthy and endure the loneliness, uncertainty, and strife that result from a proud, selfish heart that consumes most rich men.

¹⁷ It is much better to eat a simple salad in a home where genuine love and affection are freely shared than to eat the best fillet minion in a house where everyone is trying to stab each other in the back.

¹⁸ A man who has so little control over his temper that he will fly into a fit of rage at the slightest provocation incites all kinds of fights, arguments, and disagreements. On the other hand, a man who will endure a lot of abuse before he becomes angry will by his gentle and peaceful spirit deescalate an argument, a disagreement, or even a controversy in a court of law.

¹⁹ The path through life of a man who is lazy and unmotivated is like trying to hike through sticker bushes. Laziness puts all kinds of obstacles in a man's way and forces him to experience all sorts of hurts, heartaches, and disappointments. On the other hand, the approach to life and manner of living of a man who does what is pleasing in the sight of the LORD^{<upright>} makes life a real joy. Because of his godly living, the LORD will smooth his way and cause it to be unobstructed by the hurts, heartaches, and disappointments lazy men bring upon themselves by their laziness.

²⁰ A son who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise son>}₁ thrills his father over and over again that he has such a good son. On the other hand, a son who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<foolish son>} despises his mother and has nothing but contempt for her. He simply cannot say anything nice to her.

²¹ A man who does not possess sound knowledge, good understanding, a right thinking process, or a determination to do right absolutely loves to do stupid, senseless, and immoral things that ultimately bring shame and punishment back upon him ^{<folly>}. On the other hand, a man who possesses sound knowledge, good understanding, a right thinking process, and a determination to do right walks through life in a good, right, and lawful manner. As a result, his life will be good, prosperous, and free from the obstacles that cause all sorts of difficulties for foolish men.

²² If you fail to acquire good advice from people who are wise and are experts in their particular field, your endeavor will most likely end up being inferior, disappointing, or frustrating. On the other hand, when you consult many people who are wise, able to give good guidance, and are experts in their field, it almost always leads to good success in a given endeavor.

²³ A man who gives the right answer at the right time will be happy and experience deep pleasure and satisfaction. It is always a rewarding and pleasant experience to say the right thing at the very moment it is needed.

²⁴ Each time a wise man is faced with life's choices he will carefully evaluate their consequences and then make the best decision resulting in the best outcome in every area of life and practice ^{<the wise>}. His faith and trust in Jesus Christ, his good and godly manner of living, and the worthwhile goals he pursues will not only lead him closer and closer to the LORD he loves, but promise him a home in heaven when he dies. Trusting in Christ and living a in this manner will also rescue him from an early grave and a place in hell.

²⁵ A truly proud man thinks of himself as better, more deserving, more knowledgeable, and/or more able than those around him. He believes that his house, his home, and his wealth as true security. The LORD Jesus Christ hates his pride and will see that those things are torn away from him or destroyed as a result of the selfish and hurtful things he does to others and the way he thinks he is so much better than those around him. On the other hand, the LORD Jesus will see that the property boundaries of the widow are surveyed accurately, recorded correctly, and secure for a lifetime.

²⁶ The LORD Jesus Christ absolutely hates evil plans spoken by evil men. He feels that way because those plans are nothing more than designs to cause more pain, misery, distress, calamity, and/or suffering for innocent people. On the other hand, words that are spoken in kindness, pleasantness, and genuine concern are pure, clean, and good. These are the kind of communications the LORD Jesus Christ loves to hear.

²⁷ A man who gains money, investments, or possessions unjustly, violently, or through bribery brings all sorts of hurts, heartaches, and troubles back upon his own home as a result of his sin. On the other hand, a man who hates the thought of offering money or favors in exchange for someone doing something illegal or unethical ^{<bribe (dd)>} will live a long and peaceful life.

²⁸ When a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} is asked a question, he will search the depths of his heart and mind to come up with an answer that best meets the needs of the one who asked the question. On the other hand, when a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} is asked a question, he gushes forth plans and ideas designed to cause pain, misery, distress, calamity, and/or suffering for innocent people.

²⁹ The LORD has no obligation to answer the prayers of those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}. He may choose to answer a sinner's prayer if it will bring glory to the Father, but the only real exception is when a wicked man repents of his sin and calls upon Him in childlike faith to receive Christ as their personal savior from sin. He will always hear and

answers that kind of prayer. On the other hand, He always hears and welcomes the prayers of a man who has trusted Jesus Christ as his personal savior from sin and lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>}.

³⁰ When a man sees something that makes his eyes sparkle with cheerfulness you can tell that he is genuinely happy deep down inside. Then too, good, pleasant, and agreeable news brings peace, joy, and contentment. These kinds of words not only make life pleasant, but they tend to add a few pounds to the old body.

³¹ A wise man has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>}.¹ He will do his best to discipline, correct, or call down an unbeliever for his own good ^{<reproof>} in order to help him see his need to repent of his sin and trust Jesus Christ as his personal savior from sin ^{<life-giving>}. Any unbeliever who will trust in Christ and strive to live a good and godly life will for the rest of his life dwell in the company of those who have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>}.¹

³² A man who ignores or abandons being taught, corrected, and called down for his own good ^{<discipline>} actually hates himself without even knowing it. On the other hand, a man who hears and pays attention when he is taught, corrected, or punished for his own good ^{<reproof>} gains new understanding, insight, and determination ^{<understanding>} that will help him live right. A man who does this loves himself and wants to make his life better.

³³ Loving the LORD Jesus Christ enough to do good and fearing Him enough to avoid or abandon ever sinful practice is the instruction that teaches, corrects, and calls us down for our own good. This is the process by which we learn the knowledge and the skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>}.¹ Then too, having a meek and humble spirit always precedes honor, glory, or greatness just like the fear of the LORD comes before wisdom.

Chapters 16 through 22:21 — Most of these Verses use Similar Parallels or “What - Why” Comparisons (such as “This is good, and that is good too,” or “This is true, and this is why”)

Chapter 16

¹ All of the plans we make are of our own doing, and they emanate from a desire deep within us. We may tell others what we intend to do, but many times our plans don't work out like we had hoped. This is because in the end, the LORD has the last word about what actually transpires in our lives. His plans for us always take precedence over our own.

² Normally you and I will justify all of the things we do, the choices we make, and the way we live. For the most part we feel like there is nothing wrong with them, otherwise we would change. The LORD is very interested in **what** we do, but He is even more interested in **why** we do those things. Therefore, He is constantly evaluating our motives and judging us according to them.

³ Take everything you are and do — your work, your business pursuits, your relationships, your talents, and your future, and give them completely over to the LORD Jesus Christ to do with as He sees fit. In time, all of your thoughts will become good and godly. As a result, your plans will be successful and will rest securely on this stable foundation.

⁴ Jesus Christ is the God who created everything in the universe, and he made each thing in a specific way and for a specific function. Yet, all of it was intended to bring glory and honor to the LORD. Yes, He even made people capable of sinning, knowing that many would rebel against the LORD and commit acts that are wicked, illegal, illicit, or unethical ^{<the wicked>}. The LORD also made hell knowing that these wicked people would end up there as a result of their rebellion and their refusal to abandon their sin and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

5. Every person who is proud feels like he is better, more deserving, and/or more capable than those around him. Everything within him is consumed with his own importance. The LORD hates this kind of attitude, and He will see that somewhere, somehow everyone who has a proud and arrogant heart is punished for his sin. Even if a group of proud men join forces to succeed in their pride, none of them will escape judgment day and its resulting punishment.
6. All of the sinful things a man does against God and the punishment that normally results can be washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. This can happen if a wicked man will simply repent of his sin and believe the truth that Christ died on the cross of Calvary to pay the penalty for man's sins. If he will receive Jesus Christ by faith, all of his sins will be forgiven. It is the Father's tender love and kindness that makes this offer available. It is wonderful that the LORD would make such an offer, but there is something else that is wonderful. It is the fact that after a man is genuinely born again by faith in Jesus Christ he will acquire a biblical fear of the LORD. This fear of the LORD is obvious when a believer determines that he will avoid or abandon every sinful practice, especially those that controlled him before he was saved.
7. When a man's whole manner of living (his goals, his desires, his relationships, and everything else about him) is pleasing to the LORD, God makes life peaceful for him. The LORD even goes so far as to change the mind of those who are hostile toward him and wish to do him harm. In fact, the LORD will actually make those enemies want to be at peace with him. This is the kind of LORD and Savior you will find in Jesus Christ!
8. It is much better to get along with meager finances while living in a good, just, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>} than to have an abundance of wealth so that you can do anything you want yet have to live with lying, cheating, back-stabbing, and many other vices where one person treats another person badly or takes unfair advantage of him.
9. For the most part, people use their own thinking, inclinations, intuition, and desires to plan what they want to become in life or what they want to accomplish in the future. Most people couldn't care less about what the LORD thinks of their plans. The problem with this kind of thinking and planning is that the LORD knows what is best for a man and for His own glory, and His wishes are what will actually transpire regardless of how hard a man may try to accomplish what he had planned to do. Without exception, the LORD's plans take precedence over our own plans. You can bank on it.
10. When a political leader speaks authoritatively on a matter, his word is final. It is important, therefore, that what he says is the same thing God would have said if He had been the one to evaluate a case and make a judgment. The Scriptures say that a ruler is the minister of God for good. Therefore, when he judges a case, he should always render decisions that are good, right, fair, and lawful in every way and for everyone involved. Anything less is a sin.
11. A measuring device, whether it is a scale or a balance beam, should be accurate. That way the customer gets all that he paid for in a sale. The LORD is by His very nature honest, and since He owns all measuring devices, He wants both the scale and the calibration weights to be correct and accurate. So, don't cheat someone else, or the LORD will take it out of your hide.
12. It is tragic when a political leader commits illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds. Good people find this kind of conduct totally disgusting. Such conduct is especially undesirable since acting in a good, lawful, and just manner ^{<righteousness>} is the one thing above everything else that enables a political leader to stay in office for a long, long time.
13. Political leaders love those who always speak words that are good, just, and lawful. Then too, they love those who say things that are true and accurate. They know they can depend upon men like this.
14. Saying or doing things that make a political leader fly into a fit of rage and become so angry he could kill is like signing your own death warrant and inviting soldiers to carry out your execution. Only a foolish man would do such a thing. On the other hand, a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>} has the insight and ability to deescalate the situation and persuade

the political leader to calm down. Only a very wise man could do this.

15. Being in the presence of a political leader when his facial expression tells you that he is light-hearted and cheerful is refreshing and invigorating. Then too, when he is delighted that you are in his presence, the experience is every bit as refreshing and satisfying as watching a cloud bring a spring shower when the crops need it most.

16. It is a lot better to gain the ability to make the best decisions that produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<wisdom>} than to acquire a boat load of gold. Then too, it is a much better to acquire trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding than to gain a truck load of silver. Money and possessions just don't cut it. If Solomon were here, he would tell you so ^{<see Ecclesiastes>}.

17. The path of life is smooth for those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<the upright>}. The key to experiencing this smooth path is avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice. A man who carefully evaluates every place he goes and everything he does protects his life and his future.

18. A proud man thinks and acts like he is better, more deserving, and/or more capable than those around him, and he makes it obvious in an overbearing manner ^{<pride>}. As a result, sooner or later he will come crashing down in ruins. Pride always precedes the destruction that results from it. In a similar manner, when a man is arrogant and walks around with his nose in the air while looking down at others, sooner or later he will experience a serious misfortune, great loss, or deep sorrow. A haughty spirit always precedes calamity. In both cases destruction follows pride and arrogance.

19. It is much better to be humble and associate with those who are poor, needy, or afflicted than to get your share of the loot proud men acquire by taking unfair advantage of others.

20. If you prayerfully study and meditate upon the Word of God until you become prudent and able to fully evaluate each circumstance you face, you will experience a good life free from the hurts and heartaches evil men endure as a result of their sin. Then too, a man who trusts the LORD to protect, direct, and provide for him will be truly happy and experience one blessing after another.

21. A man whose whole inner being is saturated with the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>} will be known for his trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment. Then too, words spoken in a sweet and gentle way greatly increase a man's ability to persuade others to accept his views on a given issue.

22. Understanding is possessing trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment accompanied by the ability to evaluate every circumstance and only proceed with those choices that produce good and beneficial results. This kind of understanding results in a vibrant, healthy, and joyful life that just keeps getting better and better. On the other hand, a fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. The only thing he wants to learn is more and better ways of doing those things that produce hurtful, costly, and worthless results ^{<folly>}. Life for him will not be easy.

23. The whole inner being of a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>} teaches his mouth to say only those things that are good, right, and acceptable. This makes his words much more capable of persuading others to accept his ideas.

24. Kind and pleasant words are as sweet to the listener's ears as honey is to his taste. They reach to the depths of a man's heart where they heal the emotions and result in physical healing.

25. There is a manner of living and approach to life that seems good to a man who doesn't know any better, but in the end, it is the pathway that leads to death, the grave, and ultimately to hell. This is what happens when God is left out of a life.

26. It is good for a man to become hungry once in a while. Each time he feels the hunger pains they remind him that he must work hard if he is to have enough to satisfy his craving. In that sense, hunger is good.
27. A good-for-nothing, godless man feasts upon words and deeds that are immoral or depraved, and he can't wait to share his findings with someone else. As a result, his evil words will spread like wildfire in the hearts of those who are willing and eager to listen to his wicked words and take them to heart.
28. A man who deviates from what is good and right will act in a morally perverted and despicable manner. Because of his degenerate actions and attitude, he will start all kinds of fights and arguments. Then too, a man who purposely makes false statements about someone else fully intending to damage that person's character or reputation ^{<slanderer (dd)>} will destroy even the closest of friendships. Even when the facts prove the accused person's innocence, the friend who heard the lie may never believe the truth and reconcile their friendship.
29. A man of violence is heartless and will use violent physical force to injure, damage, or destroy another person or his property. A man like this will try hard to persuade a morally weak acquaintance to join him in what he considers fun. As a result, he will lead his new friend down the wrong path of life that leads only to hurts, heartaches, and destruction.
30. A man who winks the eye when he talks to you has mischief planned, and you can be sure that he intends to do something that is immoral, illegal, or destructive. In a similar manner, a man who compresses his lips is telling everyone around him that he is ready to do some deed that inflicts hurts, heartaches, injury, and / or calamity upon innocent people ^{<evil>}.
31. Living long enough to have gray hair is a real honor to an old man. It happens to a man who consistently lives in a good, just, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>} over the years. In Solomon's day most wicked men didn't live long enough for their hair to turn gray.
32. A man who is patient and takes a lot of abuse before he becomes angry is much better off than a man who only has great physical strength. Then too, a man who is able to discipline his mind, will, and emotions is much better and is much better off than a warrior who has the strength and ability to go against a city and capture it. Having self-control and/or self-discipline is more valuable than merely possessing physical strength or ability.
33. When men need to make a decision and simply can't decide what to do, they will sometimes throw the dice and agree to go with the luck of the throw. Men may see this as luck, but in reality the LORD is in control of how the dice land. In fact, if He wants us to do a certain thing, He will manipulate the circumstances so that we make the decision He desires. Watch for it because it will happen over and over again.

Chapter 17

1. It is far better to eat dry crackers in peace and quiet than to attend the most fabulous banquet where arguments, fighting, disagreements, and back-stabbing permeate the meal. That kind of tension will make a good man lose his appetite.
2. An employee who has a thorough understanding of his job, works hard and smart, is prudent in all of his dealings with his employer and his fellow employees, and has the insight to constantly improve his performance will ultimately become a manager over the employer's son who acts and reacts so poorly that his parents are thoroughly ashamed of him. In the end, such a wise employee will be included in his employer's will. Then when the employer dies, this wise man will share in part of the inheritance his employer leaves for his children. Hard work almost always pays off in time.
3. A refining pot is used to purify low melting point metals such as silver, and a furnace is used to purify higher melting point metals such as gold and platinum. In both cases, heat is used to remove the

impurities from the metals. On the other hand, the LORD Jesus tests the hearts of men and women by examining every nook and cranny of their being to see if their appetites, their emotions, their beliefs, their dedication, and their love is consistent with God's Word. If they are deficient in any of these areas, He pours on the heat of difficulty or loss in order to make them pure vessels for His glory.

4. A man who does hurtful, damaging, or morally evil things listens with great interest to anyone who talks about the same kind of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds that result in hurts, heartaches, and sorrows for others. Then too, a liar listens intently to men who share new and different ways of causing ruin, destruction, or calamity for others. He listens with great interest because he really hopes to get in on some of the action.

5. Men who mock, ridicule, or put down those who are poor and cannot defend themselves are in reality mocking Jesus Christ, the God who made both them and poor people <see Jn. 1:3>. In essence, they are saying that God isn't all that He claims to be. This is not a wise thing to do, but there is another thing that is not wise. Any man who is thrilled when someone is forced to endure deep trouble or extreme misfortune causing great loss or sorrow <at calamity (dd)> will not escape the punishment his sin deserves. The LORD Himself will see to that.

6. Grandchildren are the crowning achievement of old men. You can almost hear a grandpa say, "Have you seen my grandchildren? They are simply the best!" In a similar manner, sons love to brag about their fathers. You can almost hear a son say, "Have you seen my dad? He is simply the best!"

7. There are two situations that are totally out of place. The first is when a fool tries to talk like an excellent orator. Understand something here: a fool is stupid, lacks common sense, has perverted morals, is insensitive to God, and will argue with anyone who disagrees with him. Under normal circumstances excellent oratorical speech has real merit and virtue, but when he tries to talk that way, his foolish beliefs and manner of living cheapen and invalidate what would have been outstanding speech. The second is even worse. It is when a political leader resorts to speaking lies and deception. No one wants to follow a leader like that.

8. Money or favor given or promised to a person in a position of trust in order to influence his judgment or conduct <bribe (dd)> is like a magic spell in the eyes of a man who forces it upon others. It seems as though he gets whatever he wants whenever he wants it, and few men have enough character or fear of the LORD to oppose or expose him.

9. A man is seeking to demonstrate real love for his brother in Christ when he keeps secret the fact that his brother has defiantly stepped outside of the bounds set by the Word of God and done something wrong <transgression>. He simply will not share a brother's dirty laundry with others. On the other hand, a man who blabs someone else's faults or failures to anyone who will listen will most likely end up causing really close friends to part company. In this kind of situation, usually one friend becomes offended at what the other supposedly did or said and wants nothing to do with the perceived offender. Even when the facts show that the statements made about the perceived offender are not true, many times the offended one still won't believe the truth. Therefore, be very careful what you say about another person.

10. Gently correcting, sharply criticizing, or actually severely scolding <rebuke> a man who already has some trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment is beneficial. It will penetrate deeper into his heart and have a more positive influence upon his life and manner of living than a hundred blows to the back of one who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant <fool>. A wise man will always learn whereas a fool never will.

11. A man who is in rebellion against authority, sound morals, and the laws of the land is only interested in learning more and more immoral, unlawful, and destructive things to do or experience. He simply wants nothing to do with those who are lawful, moral, and good. As a result, God will see that a cruel man (someone more rebellious, more immoral, or more unlawful, will find that rebellious man and force him to be on the receiving end of the same hurtful, destructive, and mean things that he has caused other

people to endure. The principle of sow and reap works this way.

12. If you come across a female bear whose cubs have been stolen from her you might be severely mauled. Even so, it would be better to run into her than to happen upon a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant^{<a fool>} while he is in the process of doing or saying the foolish, useless, and senseless things he likes to do. You could be hurt much worse by the results^{<folly>} of his foolish talking and actions than you would ever be hurt by the bear.

13. A man who responds to good deeds by causing trouble or pain in return will always experience pain and trouble as a result. He will reap these things as long as he maintains such an inconsiderate and unloving response to the good people do.

14. The early stages of a heated discussion or violent conflict are like punching a small hole in an earthen dam. At first only a trickle of water escapes through the hole, but before long the hole grows large enough to rupture the dam sending a wall of water down the canyon killing everyone in its path. A quarrel escalates the same way, so abandon the quarrel before it turns into an all-out fight.

15. There are some who try to make a guilty man appear innocent even though the man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds^{<the wicked>}. Then there are others who make an innocent man appear guilty even though the man lives in a good, right, and lawful manner^{<the righteous>}. In both cases God hates such lying and deception. Don't be guilty of doing either of these things, or God will take it out of your hide.

16. Why in the world would a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant^{<a fool>} try to offer money to buy the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live^{<wisdom>}₁ or try to buy the ability to discipline, chasten, and correct himself in moral matters^{<instruction>}? He doesn't have the sense to know what to do with either of them if someone gave them to him for free.

17. A true friend will always love you no matter what happens, and brothers fight with each other from infancy. It is natural for both of them to do so.

18. A man who lacks the sense to see how he is hurting himself will co-sign for another person agreeing to be responsible to pay the debt of his friend or neighbor if that person defaults on his loan. Doing this is stupid and can be a very costly endeavor.

19. A man who loves to be defiant and eager to break the law or violate an agreement^{<transgression (dd)>} loves arguments, misunderstandings, and all-out fights. He must because he will experience them in abundance. Then too, a man who is proud and builds a bigger, fancier, or more costly house in order to show the world how important, wealthy, or deserving he perceives himself to be is setting himself up to come crashing down in ruins someday. When the disaster takes place, his life will simply fall apart in ruins.

20. A man who has a twisted, perverted, immoral mind will never find peace, happiness, or contentment. The only things he will find are hurts, heartaches, and troubles in abundance. Then too, a man whose language is twisted, perverted, and immoral will fall into all sorts of hurtful, destructive, and painful situations.

21. A father who conceives and raises a son who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant^{<a fool 03684>} will experience lots and lots of grief and regret. Then too, the father of a man who is vile, immoral, short-sighted, hostile toward God, and follows his own heart^{<a fool>} has absolutely nothing to be happy about when it comes to his son.

22. A cheerful and happy attitude is good medicine. It definitely aids in the healing process of those who are sick. On the other hand, when someone is completely overwhelmed by disease, misfortune, or sorrows, such an attitude robs a man of his strength and vitality.

23. A man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds <wicked man> will gladly accept money or favors in trade for doing something illegal or wrong <bribe (dd)> from someone who wants to see justice thwarted. After all, what difference does it make if he does one more wicked deed when he is already sold out to doing wicked deeds. Consequently, such a wicked man will do his best to pervert justice and free a guilty man.

24. A man who possesses trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment also possesses the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live <wisdom>.¹ On the other hand, a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant <a fool> is always looking for greener pastures or chasing one get-rich scheme after another.

25. A son who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant <a fool> causes his father all sorts of grief and vexation, and he causes his mother to experience severe pain, grief, and regrets. Pity the parents who rear such a son.

26. It is neither good nor beneficial to make a good, just, and lawful man <righteous> pay a penalty for being good, or to punish a political leader for doing what is right in the sight of the LORD <uprightness>.

27. A man who carefully evaluates what he is going to say and only says things that are good, right, and encouraging knows how this will benefit both himself and the listener. Then too, a man who has a steady calmness and self-control is a man with good insight and understanding of how his actions will affect his life and his future.

28. A fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. If he would keep his mouth shut he might be seen as someone who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live <wise>.¹ Yes, if he would stop talking and patiently listen for a change he could be seen as one who carefully evaluates the consequences of his actions and only proceeds with those that produce good and beneficial results <prudent>. This illusion wouldn't last long though because before long he will start talking again and show everyone that he is indeed a fool.

Chapter 18

1. A young man who abandons family, friends, and his church in order to run with people who have a distorted view on morality and spiritual things does so only for what he can get out of the experience without regard for how his actions and attitudes will adversely affect his family, his former friends, and the people of his church. If that isn't bad enough, when he is confronted by his parents, concerned friends, or his pastor, he will take his stand with his new friends and argue in favor of his new manner of living. Regardless of the trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment presented to him by wise people, he will reject it because he is totally sold out to his sin.

2. A fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. He doesn't want any part of trustworthy knowledge, good discernment, or skill in living a disciplined life. The only thing he wants to hear is what comes out of his own mouth when he tells others what he knows, what he thinks he knows, or what folly he intends to do. This is all he knows and all he wants to know.

3. When a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds <the wicked> moves into town and seems to prosper as a result of his evil deeds, good men have nothing but contempt for such a wicked, hurtful, and self-seeking man. Then too, when a man does things that bring

shame and disgrace upon himself it isn't long before people start voicing their disgust for him and what he does.

4. When a man speaks from the depths of his soul about matters of the heart and of life, many times the things he says and the motives behind his words are as difficult to figure out and fully understand as trying to search out and fully understand all of the objects and life forms on the bottom of the deepest canyon of the seas. On the contrary, words that flow from the mouth of a wise man are easy to understand. Listening to him talk about matters of life and trust in the LORD is like drinking all of the cool, clear, refreshing water you want from a natural spring. You can just keep drinking and drinking until you are full.

5. It is never good to favor a wicked man over a good man. A wicked man is guilty of breaking the law and sinning against a holy God by illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds, and he deserves to be rejected. Then too, it is never good to deprive a man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} of the justice he deserves since he is a good man and will not engage in illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds. He rightfully deserves to be supported.

6. The senseless, hurtful, and destructive things spoken by a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>} generate all sorts of heated arguments, disagreements, and fights. Because what he says causes so much trouble, his words cry out for someone to tie him down and beat his back with a whip as payment for hurting so many people.

7. The senseless, hurtful, and destructive things spoken by a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>} are the very things that will generate his own destruction. Then too, those same senseless, hurtful, and destructive words will entrap his very being. Before long they will come back to haunt him when his life simply falls apart in ruins.

8. When someone whispers something about another person that is personal and should be kept confidential, his words are swallowed hook, line, and sinker by those who enjoy hearing such things. His words are destructive, yet the kind of people who listen to these things are eager to hear and quick to believe every juicy morsel of gossip. Sharing such things is like offering a candy bar to a hungry man. It is sweet to the taste, and he will gobble it down. In the end it will find a resting place in his stomach. In a similar manner, some people will take gossip to heart and believe it long after the person spoken about has been cleared of all wrongdoing and proven innocent.

9. A man who does the least he can get by with on his job is a carbon copy of a man who damages, wastes, or destroys everything he touches. There is virtually no difference between the two.

10. The character and authority of the LORD Jesus Christ is a secure shelter available to those who are His children by faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. Those who live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will run into this shelter and find perfect safety and security. Satan simply cannot get to them while they are in the LORD's protective care.

11. The money, investments, and possessions a rich man hoards are in his eyes sufficient to protect him from all of life's setbacks and trials. In his mind he is convinced that his money will keep him as secure as the gold in Fort Knox. Notice that it is his imagination and not real protection. In reality his wealth simply cannot do that for him.

12. Being proud, arrogant, and asserting one's own self-worth and importance in an overbearing and demanding way ^{<haughty (dd)>} soon takes control of a man's whole inner being. When it does, he will do or say something that will cause his life to come crashing down in ruins. This kind of attitude always comes before disaster. On the other hand, being genuinely humble always comes before a man is praised and honored for something he genuinely deserves. The principle of sow and reap works like this in both cases.

13. Anyone who gives advice on a matter before he has heard and understands both sides of a situation is a fool. Doing so is stupid and senseless and will generate all kinds of undesirable consequences ^{<folly>}. Jumping to conclusions will only result in shame and disgrace in the end. Always listen to both sides of a situation before making a determination.
14. A man's mind, will, and emotions can hold up and stay strong even under the most severe injury or disease. On the contrary, no one can bear up well when he is completely defeated and ready to give up on life. This is when we need to be there for the one who is going through such difficulty.
15. A prudent man carefully evaluates every choice in life and only proceeds with those that will produce good and beneficial results. A man like this will acquire all kinds of trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment, and he will store them in his mind and heart for future use. In a similar manner, a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>} will always be listening for more trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment. He knows that these things will help him as he strives to live a good and godly life for the glory of Christ.
16. Presenting a valuable gift to the right person will get you into places that would otherwise be restricted to you, and giving gifts like this will secure an audience with really great and important men where you would otherwise be turned away.
17. The first one to tell you his side of the story seems justified until you hear the other side of the story. You need to hear both sides in order to know the whole truth. Don't be foolish enough to decide who is right or try to give advice before you hear and understand both sides of a disagreement.
18. When a serious disagreement comes to a point where neither side can agree to a solution, they may resort to throwing dice to decide who wins. It works because both sides, no matter how strong or powerful, agree to abide by how the dice fall. It appears to be luck, plain and simple, but it works. (Note: Prov. 16:33 shows that the LORD is actually the one who decides how the dice will land.)
19. When you do something to seriously offend a brother, he will refuse to have anything to do with you. It is much more difficult to reconcile things with him than it is to fight against a well-fortified city and conquer it. In a similar fashion, continued arguing and fighting are like the bars of a prison. They will keep you from disengaging yourself from a disagreement.
20. When a man consistently speaks in a good, edifying, encouraging, and productive manner God will see that he always has enough to satisfy his hunger. Yes, he will be fully satisfied with the return on his investment.
21. The spoken word has the power to save a life or condemn a man to death. Those who love to use words in a good, edifying, and productive way will enjoy the benefits that such conversation produces.
22. A man who finds an "excellent wife" finds a really good thing, and because of their union God Himself will look down upon the man with great delight.
23. A poor man realizes his need for God's help, so he prays to the LORD with a humble spirit begging the LORD to provide his needs. On the other hand, a rich man does not need God, so he loudly and forcefully shouts out, "I don't need God. I already have all I need. Don't talk to me about religion."
24. A man who desires to have friends must be friendly to other people (KJV), and a man who wants everyone to be his friend will come to ruin (NASB). There is a much better friend though. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and he is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Choose him!

Chapter 19

1. A man of integrity has such a sound moral, legal, and spiritual fabric that he will always do right regardless of the cost or consequences. On the other hand, a fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. It is far better to be a man of integrity than to be a fool who speaks twisted, distorted, and immoral words. Whereas a man of integrity enjoys the blessings and security that result from his godly lifestyle, a fool will only experience pain, losses, and punishment as a result of his perverted words and deeds.
2. It is not good to go through life without trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment which together will enable you to know the best way to live and act. The reason it is not good is because lacking these things will cause you to make bad choices that are either costly or hurtful or both. Then too, being in a hurry to go places or get involved with things that are wicked or ungodly incurs the guilt that sin always brings. Failing to stop and evaluate the choices presented to you will ultimately lead to hurts, heartaches, and/or punishment.
3. A man who chooses to participate in stupid or senseless activities ends up doing things that are hurtful, costly, or unprofitable. He does this because he either lacks good sense, or he lacks the ability to see the end result of his choices in life. When his life simply falls apart as a result of his poor choices, he will most likely become angry with God. In fact, he will become so consumed with anger that he will curse and swear at God blaming Him for all the troubles he has to endure, when in reality his troubles are a direct result of his own foolish choices.
4. When a man acquires wealth, he also gains lots of so-called friends. Most of them are leaches who are eager to help him spend his money, but they couldn't care less about him as a true friend. Then too, when a man becomes poor, he loses most, if not all, of the friends he had before he fell on such hard times. Since the poor man has nothing others can get from him, they don't care to associate with him. Both situations are a curse to those who must endure them.
5. A man who affirms something to be true when it is not will in time be found out and punished for his sin. It is just a matter of time before it happens. Then too, a man who lies in order to benefit himself or be a detriment to someone else will not escape the disaster that will overtake him as a result of his sin. In both cases, the principle of sow and reap will take its toll.
6. There will always be lots and lots of people standing in line hoping to receive a special favor or something of value from a generous man, and there will always be another greedy leach ready to take advantage of him. Then too, most men are willing to be a so-called friend of a man who gives sizable gifts. Man's natural bent toward greed makes him this way. In both cases, all but those who are morally self-disciplined will be tempted to take advantage of giving people.
7. A really poor man has it rough both inside and outside of the home. His own brothers and sisters not only hate him for what he has become, but they want absolutely nothing to do with him. On top of that, the friends he had before he became poor will have disappeared, and he will never see them again. He will try his best to persuade them to change their minds and renew a friendship with him, but they will simply turn their backs on him, never to return as long as he is poor.
8. It is to your benefit to gain and use the kind of trustworthy knowledge, clear insight, and good discretion that comprise godly wisdom. If you will do so, it will be evident to all that you are genuinely concerned about your welfare and that you love your own soul. Then too, if you faithfully practice using good understanding you will experience good, beneficial, and blessed things in return. In both cases the principle of sow and reap holds true.
9. A witness who lies about what he has seen or heard will certainly be punished for his sin when he is found out. It will not be a matter of if he is punished but when. Then too, a man who lies on a regular basis will not escape a premature death. In both cases, the principle of sow and reap will take its toll.

10. There are two situations that are totally out of place. The first is when a fool is fortunate enough to experience luxury, comfort, and plenty. This scenario is out of place because a fool spends all that he possesses on pleasures and possessions. It does not even cross his mind to save for the future. The second situation is even worse. It is when a slave is elevated to a place of authority over a political ruler's sons. The slave doesn't have the knowledge or self-discipline to rule for the benefit of others. All he wants is to experience pleasures and power, and he doesn't care who it hurts or what it costs others for him to enjoy those things.
11. A man's ability to understand the consequences of his actions, to use good sense in his relationships with others, and to proceed only with those choices that produce good and beneficial results ^{<discretion>} enables him to take a lot of abuse before he becomes angry. A man like this also knows that there is honor and great reward in overlooking a wrong either purposely or defiantly done against him by another. It takes a real man to have the kind of love and concern for others that allows him to forgive in this way.
12. Being in the presence of a political leader when he is so angry that he could kill the next person that crosses him is equally as scary as being in close proximity to a lion when he roars immediately prior to pouncing on his prey to kill it for his next meal. On the other hand, being in the presence of a political leader when he is delighted that you have come to see him is as refreshing and rewarding as standing under a cool shower on a hot summer day.
13. A son who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a foolish son>} does stupid and senseless things that grieve and frustrate his father to no end. If he keeps doing these things he will end up destroying his dad, and his dad may even give up on the LORD as a result. Yet there is something else that is aggravating to no end. It is when a wife is so hard to get along with that she will argue, fight, and complain at the slightest provocation. Her belligerence is as much a form of torture for a husband as if he were to have water dripping on his head all night because of a leaking roof. He simply cannot stand either for long.
14. Working long and hard in order to leave properties or a large bank account as an inheritance for his children is definitely something a father can do for his family, but a father cannot make a woman a prudent wife for his son. You see, only the LORD can make a woman into one who carefully evaluates the consequences of her choices in life and has the discernment to proceed with only those choices that will produce good and beneficial results. The LORD not only makes her a prudent woman, but then He makes her and your son's paths cross so that they can meet and fall in love. Isn't it wonderful the way the LORD does this for those of His children who are walking obediently?
15. Being lazy drags a man down to where all he wants to do is lie around and sleep. Then too, a man who is not involved in productive work will end up with a ferocious appetite, but he will have no means to satisfy that hunger. He will simply have to starve or go to work.
16. A man who obeys the teachings of the Word of God guards his whole inner being and everything about life that he holds dear. On the contrary, a man who does not pay attention to the adverse consequences of his impulsive decisions will go through life doing whatever comes naturally. In the end he will most likely experience a premature death as a result of his rebellion and ungodly lifestyle.
17. A gracious man has a deep desire to come to the aid of a poor man and shows it by giving the needy person some of his own money or possessions. In doing so, he is actually lending those things to the LORD. Since the God wants to give good things to His children and will not be in debt to anyone, He will always repay a man's generosity with generosity. Whenever the gracious man has a need, the LORD will see that there is someone or something there to meet that need. You can bank on it.
18. Teach, correct, or punish ^{<discipline>} your son every time he needs it, and start at an early age. Don't wait until he has made a complete mess of his life before you attempt to mold him into a good young man. If he has gotten into trouble, keep trying to guide him into becoming a good and godly young man. Love him through it, and don't allow yourself to wish he were dead. He may come around, and then again he may not, but he is well worth the effort.

19. A man who loses his temper and flies off the handle at the slightest provocation will pay dearly for the damage he does to others or their property. If he is arrested, convicted, and sentenced to jail, don't bail him out. Let him sit there and contemplate the error of his ways. If you bail him out, you will only have to do it again the next time he loses his temper and ends up in the same situation. Maybe he will learn from his mistake if he has to rot in jail.
20. Listen patiently to what wise men advise. Then respond properly when you are disciplined, corrected, or called down for your own good ^{<discipline>}. As a result, you will gain and retain the ability to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<wise>}. This benefit will last for the rest of your life. It works – I know because I am experiencing it!
21. Men have lots and lots of things they plan to do, and they pour a lot of their energies into making those plans come to fruition. Some of them work out, and some don't. Oh, but the things the LORD advises in His Word are the things we should pursue in earnest. When you make those kinds of plans they will last for eternity, but the things man plans on his own only bring temporary satisfaction, if that.
22. The most desirable characteristic of a man is his ability to interact with other people in a kind and gentle way. Then too, it is far better to be an honest man with meager finances than to be a habitual liar. No one wants to have anything to do with a liar.
23. A genuine fear of the LORD will drive you to do good so that you will not disappoint your heavenly Father, and it will drive you to avoid or abandon every sinful practice so that your heavenly Father will not have to punish you. Living in this manner produces life at its best. It will enable you to lie down and sleep completely satisfied with whatever life may bring your way. An added benefit is that you will never have to experience the distress, misery, or injuries the wicked experience as a result of their sinful lifestyle.
24. A truly lazy man will put his spoon in the dish and feel like it is too much work to bring it to his mouth. You can't be any lazier than that!
25. A naïve man seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. Therefore, he makes many poor and costly mistakes. If you severely punish a man who mocks and ridicules sin and those who try to avoid it ^{<a scoffer>} you may succeed in getting a naïve man to reconsider his approach to life. He might even gain clever discernment and hard-headed common sense ^{<shrewd (dd)>}. On the contrary, if you reprove, rebuke, or correct ^{<reprove>} a man who already understands the importance of listening with interest when he is being corrected, he will gain more knowledge to add to what he already has. This will enable him to live better and avoid making the same mistakes over and over again. Whereas you might change a naive man by punishing the scoffer, you will always change a man of understanding for the better by correcting him in love.
26. A son who becomes physically violent and attacks his father or runs his mother out of her own home is shameful and a thorough disgrace for his family.
27. Gregory, if you refuse to listen and respond appropriately when you are taught, corrected, or called down for your own good ^{<discipline>} you will wander off the path of doing right and forget the words of knowledge, understanding, and discernment. Don't do it because this would be a major mistake.
28. A good-for-nothing witness will distort the truth and make a travesty of the judicial process. No one could get a fair trial if this kind of man gives testimony. Then too, words spoken by a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} propagate and fuel perverted or distorted deeds that cause lots of troubles, sorrow, and pain ^{<iniquity>} for innocent, undeserving people.
29. A conviction with its accompanying punishment is being made ready for a man who mocks the Word of God or ridicules the idea of sin and those who try to avoid it ^{<scoffers>}. Then too, a severe whipping is waiting to be applied to the back of a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<fools>}.

Chapter 20

1. Alcoholic beverages will make you drunk if you ingest enough of them. Then when you get drunk they will stand back and laugh at your stupidity as they make an absolute fool out of you. Hard liquor will take control of you much quicker, and when it sinks its teeth into you, it will turn you into a man who is loud, belligerent, and out of control with anger—sometimes accompanied by violence. It is not unusual for someone in this condition to be ready to fight the first person who crosses him. Anyone who drinks enough of to become drunk is definitely not wise.
2. Being in the presence of a political ruler when he is so angry he could kill the next person who walks into his headquarters is a frightening experience. It is every bit as scary as standing in close proximity to a lion when it roars just prior to pouncing on an animal that is to become its next meal. Any man who does something to provoke a ruler to this kind of anger has just signed his own death warrant.
3. Refusing to take part in an argument or fight is an honor for a self-disciplined man. Refraining like this is admirable, but a man who is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him ^{<a fool>} will jump right into an argument even if he had nothing to do with what generated the disagreement.
4. A truly lazy man will not work when work needs to be done. As a result, he will not have the financial means to meet his needs both today and in the future. He will simply go hungry and have to beg.
5. For the average man, trying to understand the thoughts and motives locked deep inside of a man is like trying to understand what lies at the bottom of the deepest canyon in the ocean. Discovering things that deep down is impossible without a submersible camera or a deep diving submersible vehicle, but a man who has the knowledge, understanding, and discernment to counsel well is able to draw the thoughts and motives out of a man so that he can counsel him well.
6. A lot of men are quick to claim how committed and faithful they are to the LORD, to you as a friend, or to some other cause. In reality, though, it is hard to find a man who is consistently faithful and can always be trusted to fulfill his commitment to you in whatever cause he has agreed to support.
7. A righteous man is one who is lawful, just, and good. He has strong moral and spiritual values and will not violate them no matter what the cost or consequences ^{<integrity>}. When his children see his blessed life and learn to live like him, they too will experience the blessings that come from living a good and godly life. Every time they remember their father's good reputation they will be blessed all over again.
8. A ruler or judge who upholds the law and gives every man the justice he deserves will soon develop a strong reputation. In time, his stern look will be all it takes to make lawbreakers start shaking in their boots. As a result, lawbreakers will migrate to other municipalities because they are afraid to break the law in his jurisdiction. They know that if they are tried in his court they will receive the justice and resulting punishment they rightfully deserve.
9. Can anyone say that he has such self-control that he has not sinned today, or has anyone reached the point of sinless perfection? Certainly not! Simply ask the wife of a man who claims he has. She'll tell you the kind of sinner he is even if he is disillusioned.
10. The LORD hates it when a man cheats customers by rigging his scales or altering his measuring devices so that they give customers less than what they agreed to purchase. Yes, the LORD hates this kind of greed with a passion, and you can count on the fact that somewhere, somehow God will make people who do either of these things pay dearly for their sin.
11. The things a young man does and says build his reputation in the community. If his conduct is morally pure and he does what is good, correct, and right in the sight of the LORD, he will distinguish himself far above the average boy as being a good and honest young man. If, though, he becomes involved in sinful activities, he will gain a reputation as a troublemaker.

12. The LORD made the human ear capable of hearing the Word of God with the intent of doing what it says, and He made the eye capable of seeing and perceiving the value of doing the good it observes. Yes, He made them, and he is the One who gives understanding through their use.
13. Don't allow yourself to sleep so much or take so many naps that you sleep your life away. If you do, you will become a poor man. Open your eyes, see what needs to be done, and do it. In doing so, you will make enough income to satisfy your family's needs and have some left over to give to others in need.
14. A deceitful man tells the seller that his merchandise isn't worth as much as he is asking. He does this in order to purchase it for a lot less than the seller is asking. Once the sale is made, the buyer runs to his friends and brags about the tremendous merchandise he bought at such a good price. This practice is deceptive, and a man of integrity would never do it.
15. The world is full of precious metals and valuable jewels, but the benefits that result from words spoken from a heart and mind filled with trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment are much more precious than any earthly possession.
16. If you are stupid enough to sign a contract agreeing to be held responsible for the debt of a man you don't know anything about, be sure to get some collateral from him. When and if the stranger defaults on his loan you will be required to come up with the money to pay every penny he owes. By getting collateral from him at least you will have some help paying his debt. Then too, if a man pledges to pay a certain amount of money in exchange for having illicit sexual relations with a prostitute, don't let him get out of paying everything he promised. Pressure him to pay if necessary. (Please notice that the second half of this verse is Solomon's view, not mine.)
17. A man who acquires wealth or possessions by deceptive, illegal, illicit, or unethical means will initially be thrilled with the things he gains, but in the end his life will be as miserable as someone trying to chew on rocks.
18. Get good advice and make detailed plans before engaging your enemy in a conflict. Then, when all of your plans are in place, attack or defend using the wise and knowledgeable advice your counselors have given you. By all means, don't go into battle unprepared.
19. Anyone who goes around sharing things that are not true hoping to damage or destroy another man's character or reputation ^{<slander (dd)>} reveals things that should be kept secret even if they are true. Therefore, don't get involved with anyone who is so careless and thoughtless as to gossip.
20. A son who disrespects his mom or dad so much that he will curse and ridicule them, will experience a premature death when things get so bad that his life is turned completely upside down. The principle of sow and reap works this way.
21. Large sums of money or possessions received as a gift, won in the lottery, or gained as an inheritance without having to work for them will not last long. It looks like a lot of money in the beginning, but it will soon dwindle down to nothing. Since the person receiving the money didn't have to work for it, he most likely won't value it enough to invest it for the future. In fact, more often than not, people who receive such gifts simply spend it all on things for the present. Within a few years they are broke, and all of the money is gone.
22. Don't be foolish enough to say, "Some guy did something to me that caused pain, unhappiness, or misery ^{<evil>}. I'll show him. I'll make him pay by doing the same kinds of things to him in return. That way he will be forced to experience the same kind of pain, unhappiness, or misery I endured because of him."
Wait just a minute brother. Don't try to take matters into your own hands. There is a much better way to handle the situation. Just be patient and wait for the LORD to get even with the man for the wrong he has done to you. In His good time he will make the man pay dearly for his sin against you, and He will do a much better job of extracting retribution than you could ever do.

23. A measuring device that a merchant knows is wrong or has purposely been altered to give the customer less than he agreed to buy is cheating, and the LORD hates such greed. Then too, it is simply not a good business practice to alter a scale in order to take unfair advantage of a customer. The LORD hates this kind of greed too, and in either case you will be punished when you are discovered.

24. Every step a man takes and every circumstance of his life has been planned out in detail from eternity past by the LORD. Therefore, how can we fully understand how or why circumstances and situations happen the way they do? We can't, so simply trust in the fact that the LORD knows what's best for us. It is the only way to find real peace and contentment in life .

25. Making a promise to God recklessly and in the heat of emotions before you have had a chance to seriously evaluate what you will be required to do in order to fulfill that promise is a trap into which many people fall. Once you have made a promise to God it is too late to ask what it will cost for you to keep your commitment. The LORD expects you to keep your vow, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Therefore, understand all that will be required of you before you make a vow to God, and then fulfill what you promise.

26. A political leader who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise>} will apprehend and try in court all those in his district who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}. Once they are found guilty, he will make sure that they are punished quickly and severely so that other lawbreakers will see and fear. Criminals will soon learn that the punishment they will receive in this ruler's jurisdiction is not worth the cost, so they will take their criminal activities elsewhere.

27. The mind, will, and emotions of a man are like a small candle that sheds light showing what a man is on the inside. The LORD Jesus Christ uses that light, be it ever so small, to examine every thought, deed, and motive of a man's whole inner being. There isn't anything about us that the LORD does not know and fully understand, so be good and act discretely.

28. Being faithful, kind, and good and always telling and seeking the truth are the very things that will guard, protect, and preserve a political leader. His political position and the longevity of it are a direct result of his faithfulness in being good, lawful, and just ^{<righteousness>} in both his personal and in his public life.

29. Young men place great confidence in their strength and ability to accomplish great things, and old men are honored for their wisdom and maturity. Their gray hair is an outward indication of their wisdom.

30. Watching a guilty man being whipped severely enough to cause bruising will persuade a sensible man to realize that engaging in sin is not worth the punishment that sin generates. Then too, actually receiving severe punishment makes a man realize that he must repent of his evil activities and be clean inside so that he doesn't have to experience the same punishment again. This process is a lot like using a Scotch-Brite and soap to scrub the inside of a cooking utensil . It takes a lot of hard scrubbing, but when you are done the utensil will be squeaky clean. In the same way, a lawbreaker ends up becoming clean on the inside when you punish him properly.

Chapter 21

1. The LORD controls the mind, will, and emotions of every political leader. When He desires to do so, He can change the mind of a ruler to accomplish His own purposes as easily as He can change the path of a river. The LORD may not choose to do either of these things, but if He does, it is a simple matter for Him. Don't forget, He is always in control, even when it doesn't look like it.

2. We always seem to find a way to justify what we do because we tend to base our actions solely upon our own set of values. While you and I look at what a man does in order to evaluate whether his actions and attitudes are good or bad, the LORD compares every man's motives against His own set of standards in order to determine whether, in fact, their motives are actually good or bad.

3. The LORD desires for us to live in a good, just, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>} and be fair and equitable with our neighbors ^{<justice>}. Living like this is much more important to Him than any sacrifice of our time or money, especially if we are engaging in some sinful practice.
4. There are three things that are absolutely sinful. They are: 1) looking down your nose so as to say that you are more important than others ^{<haughty eyes>}; 2) being so full of yourself that you brag about how you are better, more able, or more deserving than everyone else around you ^{<a proud heart>}; and 3) leaving God out of your life while gloating in the prosperity you gain by illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds ^{<the lamp of the wicked>}.
5. The thoughts and plans of a hard-working and industrious man will most certainly produce good and beneficial results in the long run. On the other hand, anyone who jumps into projects or opportunities with little or no thought or counsel will soon become a poor man.
6. Acquiring money, wealth, and/or valuable possessions by lying or deceit won't last long. They are here for a short time, and then they are gone forever. Seeking riches in this manner is, in essence, seeking a premature death. This is exactly what will happen to you if you continue to engage in this kind of activity.
7. Inflicting intense, turbulent, and often destructive physical force upon some innocent victim ^{<violence>} by men who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} is the very thing that will shackle those who do such things and propel them down the road to disaster and a premature death. This will happen to wicked men because they steadfastly refuse to act in a just, right, and fair manner.
8. The course through life and the manner of living of a man who is guilty of committing criminal acts is immoral, perverted, and capricious. On the other hand, the conduct of a man who is pure and clean on the inside is always right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>}.
9. It is far better and less stressful to live alone in a small room in the attic than to share a whole house with a woman who nags and will argue and fight at the slightest provocation. She makes life absolutely miserable for a man, and it doesn't take long living with her to realize this truth.
10. The whole inner being of a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} craves one opportunity after another to participate in some evil deed. In fact, it is all he can think about. As a result, people who live around him hate to see him coming because they have absolutely no use for him.
11. A naïve man seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. Therefore, he makes many stupid and costly mistakes. A scoffer not only vocally and harshly mocks the Bible, but he also mocks the idea of sin and those who try to live godly. When a naïve man watches a scoffer receive severe punishment, he starts to understand the need to evaluate his own decisions and make good choices so that he won't do something that will result in the same harsh punishment. On the other hand, when you teach new truth to a man who already has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<the wise>}, he will always store it in his heart and mind. He knows that this kind of information will help him succeed in life and in his walk with the LORD. Whereas the naïve man **may learn** from his experience, the wise man **will always learn** from his.
12. A man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} evaluates what is going on in the home of those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}. He knows the kind of guilty sinners these people are, so he makes a point of seeing that they are reported to law enforcement, apprehended, tried in a court of law, and punished for their wicked and immoral deeds. As a result, the wicked man's home and life will simply fall apart in ruins. In fact, God may decide to do the job Himself because their wickedness is so great.
13. A man who will not hear the cry for help by poor or needy people will one day be in need himself, but there will be no one there to help him. The principle of sow and reap normally works this way.

14. Giving a gift or money behind closed doors may be the very thing that pacifies a man who is angry with you, and offering someone money or favors in exchange for doing something that is illegal, illicit, or unethical ^{<bribe (dd)>} has the potential of appeasing a man who is so angry with you that he could kill.
15. Seeing that all parties involved get what they rightfully deserve is deeply satisfying for a man who lives in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>}, but those who break the law and do perverted deeds that cause hurts, heartaches, and/or trouble for others ^{<iniquity>} are deathly afraid of getting what they deserve.
16. A man who abandons the practice of carefully evaluating where he is going in life or forgets to carefully considering the consequences of each of his choices in life will experience hurts and heartaches in abundance. In the end, he will die a premature death and lie in a grave alongside others who are six feet under.
17. A man who makes pursuing pleasures the focal point in life will end up being a poor man. Then too, a man who loves the best of wines and delicacies will never become rich. In both cases, they won't have any money to save for the future because they will have spent all of it on pleasures they feel they must enjoy today. This is one of the characteristics of a fool.
18. Those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} will pay the penalty for their sin instead of those who live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>}. Then too, those who would violate an allegiance or the confidence someone has placed in them ^{<treacherous (dd)>} will pay the penalty for their sin instead of those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>}. Righteous and upright men do not do the evil things wicked and treacherous men do, so they will not have to pay the penalty for committing such evil deeds.
19. It is far better and more peaceful to live alone in a shack in the Alaskan wilderness than to live in a fancy house shared with a woman who nags all the time and is always ready to argue or fight at the slightest provocation. A woman like this continually causes trouble, distress, and misery in the home ^{<vexing (dd)>}. A man doesn't have to live with this kind of a woman long before he realizes this truth.
20. A man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise>}₁ will save for the future. If you visit his home you will find valuable and desirable things there. On the other hand, a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<foolish man>} will not save for the future. Instead, he spends all the money he acquires on the pleasures he can experience today.
21. A man who not only dedicates all of his energies toward learning how to live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>} but also seeks to be faithful to and dependable in whatever cause to which he commits himself ^{<loyalty>} will 1) experience life at its best, 2) gain a better understanding of and ability to live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteousness>}, and 3) receive genuine honor and praise as a result of his excellent reputation.
22. A man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>}₁ will find a way to breach the walls behind which mighty men hide for protection. Once the mighty man is defenseless, the wise man will have effectively destroyed the very things that gave the mighty man his sense of security.
23. The man who has made up his mind that he will not say anything that is untrue, offends another, or is destructive has put a safeguard in place that will keep him from having to experiencing all of hurts and heartaches endured by those who speak whatever comes to mind.
24. A man who is insultingly contemptuous in his speech and conduct causes good men to despise him. Therefore, he is referred to by three names: 1) Proud, that is, one who is openly proud, 2) Haughty, that is, one who is blatantly and disdainfully proud, and 3) Scoffer, that is, one who makes a mockery of everything that is good and godly.

25-26. A lazy man wants to have all of the things a working man possesses, but he refuses to work in order to acquire them. In doing so, he signs his own death warrant. ²⁶ He spends his time dreaming about getting things while the man who lives in a good, just, right, and lawful manner <righteous> is actively involved in sharing some of his possessions with those in need. Like Job of old, a truly righteous man would never think of letting someone in need walk away without giving him at least the bare essentials.

27. A wicked man is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds. God hates it when a man like this gives his time or money as a sacrifice to the LORD in order to appease his own guilty conscience. It is even more detestable to God when a wicked man brings his gift hoping it will generate better success in his sinful practices.

28. A witness who consistently refuses to tell the truth about what he has seen or heard will ultimately be blotted off the face of the earth as a result of his sin. On the other hand, a man who listens to and follows the truth will communicate the truth perpetually. Even after he dies, his words will continue to be heard by generations to come.

29. A man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds <the wicked> likes to give the impression that he is tough enough to weather any challenge life may bring his way. Ah, but don't believe him because it is only a show. He will run and hide when law enforcement is hot on his trail or any time he feels threatened. On the other hand, a man who does what is right in the sight of the LORD <upright> will faithfully adhere to sound Biblical morals and practice living in a good and godly manner. This is what secures his future so that he can safely weather all of life's storms. Now that's real security.

30. You cannot argue with or fight against the LORD and win. Knowing how to triumph in combat, how administer shrewdly, or how to live a godly life like God intended man to live <wisdom>¹ are of no use against Him; having good intelligence, insight, and perception <understanding> are of no use against Him; and being able to give excellent advice is of no use against Him. Now, if none of these things are effective in fighting the LORD, what is? The answer is obvious—absolutely nothing!

31. A political leader, or a whole nation for that matter, may acquire massive amounts of the best armament and give their military the best training possible, but they will not win a battle unless the LORD wants them to win. If He doesn't, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that they can do to win the fight.

Chapter 22

1. Having and maintaining an honorable, worthy, and respectable reputation <good (dd) name> is more desirable and more rewarding than owning large sums of money, investments, or possessions. In addition, being loved and accepted by those around you is more desirable and more rewarding than owning a boat load of silver or gold.

2. Wealthy men and poor men have this one thing in common: The LORD created both of them. As a result, He does not prefer the rich over the poor. To Him every soul is of equal value.

3. A prudent man carefully evaluates every choice in life and proceeds only with those that will produce good and beneficial results. Therefore, he will easily recognize when someone is doing something that is not only morally wrong but will cause harm, pain, misery, or disaster for others <the evil (dd)>. He understands that punishment awaits those who do such things, so he will stay as far away from them as he can, especially when they are actually doing their evil deeds.

On the other hand, a naïve man is simple-minded, gullible, and seldom evaluates the consequences of his choices in life. Therefore, he cannot see or understand the danger of participating in such evil deeds, so he will gladly participate in the “fun”. Then, when the deed is done and he is caught and judged, both he and those who enticed him will end up being severely punished for doing such a foolish thing.

4. When you maintain a modest view of your own importance <humility (dd)> and fear the LORD enough to avoid or abandon every sinful practice, you will be rewarded with three things: 1) You will gain wealth and

prosperity, 2) you will be held in high regard and greatly respected by others, and 3) you will experience life at its very best.

5. A man who lives according to perverted morals will act and react in such a detrimental way that he will have to endure one painful experience after another. In the end, he will be caught in and punished by the trap that his wicked manner of living generates for him. On the other hand, a man who is careful to avoid such practices and has made up his mind that he will never follow perverted morals will make a point of staying as far away as he can from those who do.

6. If you train a child from infancy to love and fear the LORD, his love of the LORD will be the driving force that causes him to do good, and his fear of the LORD will be the driving force that causes him to avoid or abandon every sinful practice. If you do your job well, he will still be doing good and avoiding sinful practices when he becomes an old man.

7. Some wealthy men use their money and power to exercise authority over poor men. The power wealth affords and the inability of the poor to resist them enables the rich men to do this. In a similar manner, a man who borrows money becomes and stays subservient to the lender until he pays back every penny that he owes.

8. A man who practices perverted, sinful deeds will harvest a bumper crop of hurts, heartaches, and losses with nothing of value to show for it in the end. He won't like what he must endure as a result, but these are the consequences of his sin. In the end, his intense, disordered, and often destructive rage ^{<fury} _{<dd>} will cease to exist and vanish forever. His own deeds will be the very things that generate the punishment that will accomplish this.

9. A man who is unselfish and willing to share some of what he possesses with those in need will be a happy man. This is true because God notes those who give part of what they possess to help the poor, and He always rewards them with good things in return.

10. If there is someone among you who harshly ridicules the Bible and those who want to live godly, run him off so that he cannot come back. Get firm with him if necessary in order to make him leave, but make him go. When you are rid of him, the arguments, belittling, and sometimes violent conflicts ^{<contention} _{<dd>} he causes will go away along with him. Yes, when he is gone the constant disputing along with the shame and disgrace he tries to lay upon you will stop. You will finally be at peace.

11. A good man not only loves to maintain pure, clean, and ethical morals with every ounce of his being, but he also talks in a manner that is good, encouraging, and edifying. A political ruler will always consider this kind of man his friend.

12. The LORD sees and hears every thought, motive, and deed of every man and woman throughout time. He stands guard over every expression of trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and/or excellent skill to make sure that they are productive and last a long, long time. On the other hand, the LORD makes sure that the actual words spoken by a man who cannot be trusted because he is disloyal, unfaithful, or deceitful ^{<treacherous} _{<dd>} are turned upside down and ultimately come to ruin. Good words last, but deceitful words vanish into obscurity.

13. A truly lazy man will come up with any excuse to get out of work. He is creative, and some of his excuses are as far-fetched as saying, "I can't go to work today because there is a lion loose in our neighborhood. If I go out of the house I might be killed, so I'd better stay here in bed where it is safe." The lazy man has a vivid imagination, I'll say that much for him.

14. The seductive words spoken by an unfaithful wife are a trap. The burning desire of this kind of woman is to get you into bed with her so that you and she can share forbidden sexual pleasures. Be careful because her words are like a deep pit. Any man who will allow her to convince him to join her in forbidden sexual pleasures will fall into this pit and never get out. He is simply trapped there for life. Those who are

viewed as disgusting in the eyes of the LORD Jesus Christ are the ones who will fall into this pit because they refuse to do what is right.

¹⁵. A child is born with a sin nature. It is natural for him to be rebellious, lack good sense, and lack good foresight. Therefore, his stupid and mischievous actions produce painful and costly results. This kind of conduct is such an integral part of his being that he must be taught to tell the truth and do good. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to teach, correct, or spank a child in love whenever he needs it in order to remove his bent toward rebellion and disobedience. This is an effective tool that will help mold a child into a truly good and godly adult.

¹⁶. There are two types of people who will become poor men and accomplish nothing of value in life. They are 1) a man who oppresses, violates, defrauds, or extorts poor people in order to gain more wealth, power, or possessions, and 2) a man who gives gifts to wealthy men in hopes of receiving favors in return.

¹⁷. Gregory, make up your mind that you will listen with great interest when someone who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live^{<wise>¹} speaks wise counsel. Then make up your mind that you will do what you hear. ¹⁸. If you will guard with fidelity the trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, clear insight, and good discernment you learn and purpose in your heart to follow it, you will experience a sweet and pleasant life. You need to practice doing this so that the things you learn will always be on the tip of your tongue ready to be shared with anyone who challenges your faith and morals. ¹⁹. I have taught you today so that you will have the utmost trust and confidence in Jesus Christ. Since this is so extremely important, I have taught you myself, and not left it to someone else. ²⁰. Wouldn't you say that I have done a good job of writing excellent things regarding both advice, trustworthy knowledge, and sound understanding? ²¹. I have done this so that you may know and understand the certainty of the words of truth so that you can always give a correct, appropriate, and truthful answer to anyone who may question your trust in and obedience to Jesus Christ the LORD.

Chapter 22:22 through 25:10 — Most of These Verses Teach What to Avoid (The majority include the words “Do Not”)

²². Don't steal from a poor man simply because he is poor and cannot defend his own interests, and don't use the law or the courts unfairly to put undue pressure upon, violate, defraud, or extort those who are poor, needy, and already experiencing hurts and heartaches. ²³. If you do, the LORD Jesus Himself will come to their defense and demand your life as retribution. God will deal this way with anyone who robs the poor. Of this you can be certain.

²⁴. Some men become angry at the slightest provocation, and others go beyond simple anger. They will actually fly into a fit of rage and spout poison. Don't allow either kind of man to become your close friend. In fact, don't spend time with them or do things with them. ²⁵. If you do, you will eventually become just like them. In the end, you too will become an angry, hot-tempered man, and you will have walked into a trap from which you cannot escape. Therefore, avoid people like this.

²⁶. Don't be one of those who signs a contract promising to be held responsible for the debt of someone else if they default on their loan. ²⁷. If you don't have enough money in your savings account to pay the debt in full without creating a financial hardship for yourself, why put yourself in a position where you could lose everything you own and have to sleep on the street if the other guy defaults on his loan? It just doesn't make good sense.

²⁸. Don't cheat your neighbor by secretly moving his boundary markers in order to make it appear that you own more land than your title shows. Those boundary markers were placed there by your forefathers, and it is only right that they should stay right where they were initially placed.

²⁹. Do you see a man who is a master at his trade? Watch this man, because the quality of his work will generate a notable reputation for him. As a result, He won't be limited to being honored by men of no importance. No, no! He will be invited to visit prominent men in high places.

Chapter 23

- ¹. If you are invited to attend a dinner hosted by a well-to-do political leader, be very careful to recognize who it is that invited you and what he might want from you in return. ² If you eat like a pig, or if you think you will get something from this guy, you might as well slit your own throat for all the good it will do you. ³ Don't crave the fine and expensive things he possesses because they are deceiving. They come at a very high price, and you most likely will not be willing to pay what it costs to be where he is in finances and power.
- ⁴ Don't wear yourself out spending all your energies trying to amass a great store of wealth and possessions. Stop making it the focal point of your life, and learn to be content with the things that you have. ⁵ This is the best way to live, because although you may carefully monitor your investments, before long they may simply vanish into thin air. All too often it seems like wealth sprouts wings and flies off like an eagle, completely out of reach and never to be seen again. The unfortunate part about the whole situation is that when it happens you cannot do a single thing to stop the demise of your wealth.
- ⁶ Don't eat a meal with or accept a gift from a man who is only concerned about himself and his own interests. Don't crave the fine and costly things he possesses. Always keep in mind that he has ulterior motives in mind when he is nice to you, and all he can think about is what he can get from you. ⁷ He may say, "Here, enjoy all you want. Eat up!" But he doesn't care in the least about you or your welfare. Beware because he is not your friend. ⁸ In the end, you will become sick of him and want to throw up what you have eaten. Yes, all of the nice things you say to him will have been totally wasted. Beware!
- ⁹ Don't speak words of wisdom in the presence of a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>}. If you do, he will merely look down upon you with contempt and ridicule what you have to say. He hates trustworthy knowledge and sound understanding, so he will react adversely when you talk about real wisdom and understanding. He wants nothing whatsoever to do with anything that involves prudence, understanding, or self-discipline.
- ¹⁰ Don't cheat an orphan by moving the boundary markers on his property so that you can claim part of his property as your own, and don't go into his fields to harvest some of his produce for yourself. ¹¹ Be careful because the boundary markers were put there a long time ago, and the orphan's Redeemer, Jesus Christ Himself, is mighty. He will be the orphan's lawyer and protector, and in the end, the LORD will win. Then He will take retribution out of your hide, and you will not like how the LORD will punish you.
- ¹² Be willing with your whole being to discipline, chasten, and/or correct your child when he needs it, and study the Scriptures in order to learn the best way to do it. ¹³ Don't be unwilling to spank your child. When you spank him he will cry vigorously, but he will not die. ¹⁴ In fact, spanking just might rescue him from a premature death.
- ¹⁵ Gregory, if your heart is saturated with the kind of trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and good discernment that enables you to make the best decisions that result in the best outcome in every area of life and practice ^{<is wise>}, ¹⁶ then my heart will be glad, and deep down inside I will shout for joy each time you speak what is good, right, and acceptable. Do it for me, will you?
- ¹⁷ Don't allow yourself to envy the pleasures sinners enjoy or the things they possess. Rather, fear the LORD by avoiding or abandoning every sinful practice, and do good. ¹⁸ Without a doubt there is a bright and lasting future if you do, and your hopes will not be taken away from you.
- ¹⁹ Gregory, listen to what I have to say with the intent of doing what I teach you. If you do, you will gain the trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and the skill to make the best decisions that produce the best results in every area of life and practice ^{<be wise>}. Then you will be able to choose the best path through life. ²⁰ With this in mind, don't befriend or associate with drunks or those who overindulge in eating. ²¹ It is important to understand that both the drunkard and the glutton will end up being poor men. They will become drowsy, and because they sleep so much of the time they will soon be out of money.

Then they will have to wear the same old tattered clothing because they spent all of their money on food or alcohol. Don't be like them.

²². Listen with the intent of learning and obeying what I, your birth father, try to teach you, and do not look down upon your mom with contempt or disrespect when she is older. ²³. Purchase all of the truth you can get, and don't sell it at any price. In addition, accept discipline, chastening, and correction in moral matters ^{<instruction>}, gain the ability to understand what life is all about ^{<understanding>}, and acquire the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>}.¹ Yes, acquire as much of these as you can. ²⁴. The father of a good, just, and lawful son ^{<righteous>} will be thrilled, and a man who rears a son who actually has this kind of wisdom will have joy deep down in his soul. ²⁵. Gregory, be that good and wise son so that your mother and I can be thrilled to pieces, and do it so that your mom can be glad that she brought you into this world.

²⁶. Gregory, give yourself completely to me, and be pleased with the way of life I have demonstrated by my life and am about to teach you verbally. ²⁷. Do what I tell you, because a prostitute is a deep pit into which you would fall headlong if you engage in illicit sexual relations with her, and an adulterous wife is a narrow well into which you would fall and be stuck forever if you were to engage in illicit sexual relations with her. ²⁸. You see, women like these will disguise themselves as good, innocent women, but inside they simply can't wait to spring their seductive trap on any willing man. They are like a robber, casing the scene, waiting for the most opportune time to break in and rob another man of his innocence. They simply cannot wait to add another man to the list of those who have been unfaithful to their wives and their God. The world is full of such men, so don't become one more.

²⁹. 1) Who has deep suffering, grief, and misfortune ^{<woe (dd)>}? 2) Who has deep distress and regret? 3) Who has arguments in abundance and sometimes violent conflict? 4) Who has anxiety and troubles that drive him to complain and gripe? 5) Who has cuts and bruises for no apparent reason? 6) Who has red, bloodshot eyes? ³⁰. The answer is obvious. It is the guy who has spent too much time drinking wine or the one who keeps saying, "I just need one more drink". ³¹. Don't look with desire upon wine when it is an obvious red color, when it sparkles in the glass, or when it goes down smoothly. ³². You see, after a man has ingested enough of the stuff, it will get its teeth into him and inject its poison into his system. ³³. In this condition, his morals will go out the window, and his mind will speak perverted things that he would never say if he were sober. ³⁴. He will do foolish things like taking a nap in the middle of the ocean, or do dangerous things like taking a nap at the top of a four hundred foot high radio tower. ³⁵. People will hit him with their fists, and he won't even feel it. They will beat him, but he won't have the sense to know what is happening. Sooner or later he will wake up from his drunken stupor, and the first thing he will do is look for another drink. So, the cycle starts all over again.

Chapter 24

¹. It is true that evil men seem to enjoy so many pleasures and possessions that you can't. Oh, but don't be jealous of them or allow yourself to think you need to take part in their evil deeds so that you can enjoy those things too. ². It is simply not wise to get involved with them because they are completely sold out to dreaming up more and more ways of using physical force to injure or abuse innocent people ^{<violence (dd)>} in order to gain what they want. When they talk with one another, the only things they can talk about are more ways of afflicting troubles, hurts, or disaster upon others.

³. What is the best way to build a house? First, use wisdom in advanced planning. Choose the right floor plan, secure a good architect that will make detailed drawings, make a detailed materials list, and acquire quality materials that will be delivered to the job site. Second, understand and use proper methods of assembling the building so that the finished product will have beauty, integrity, and value. ⁴. Third, gain trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and good insight into what constitutes beauty in decorating the house and then acquire the items that give the home real value.

⁵. A man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise men>}¹ is a man of strength and integrity. Then too, a man has a superior ability to accomplish great things when he possesses trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and skill gained by experience in godly living

also. ⁶ Therefore, seek for and listen to many wise counselors who can give sound, biblical advice so that you can successfully fight a physical battle or fight the good fight of faith. Yes, seek the advice of many counselors because doing so brings good success.

⁷ Having the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>₁} and heeding the advice of someone who disciplines, corrects, or calls you down for your own good ^{<instruction>} are beyond the comprehension of a man who is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him ^{<a fool>}. He won't even open his mouth to speak when he is in the presence of a group of wise leaders of his city.

⁸ A man who plans to do things that are immoral, depraved, or wicked will end up causing pain and trouble for innocent people. As a result, he will rightfully gain a bad reputation in the community. He will be known as one who plans shrewd and devious activities and regularly carries out one evil deed after another ^{<schemer (dd)>}.

⁹ Inventing, planning, and perfecting, deeds that produce disastrous consequences because they lack good sense, foresight, and moral restraint ^{<folly>} is a sin. Then too, good men hate a man who aggressively mocks the Bible and ridicules the idea of sin those who try to live godly.

¹⁰ If you give up, drop out, or run out of steam when serious troubles or distress come upon you, then your strength, ability, and determination to whip a problem and bring about a favorable solution is sadly lacking. How you start a race is not the most important matter. How you finish the race is what shows the kind of man you really are.

¹¹ Get out there and rescue those who are being led to certain death, and hold back those who are staggering toward a brutal massacre where they will die. Yes, restrain them any way you can. ¹² It is not a valid excuse to say, "Man, I didn't know anything about it. How could I help?" Do you think God doesn't have the insight and discernment to look deep into the recesses of your heart and soul and fully understand your thoughts and motives? Can't you see that He knows everything about you since He guards, protects, and watches over your soul every moment of the day and night? Can't you see that He will repay good with good and evil with evil in proportion to what a man has done? Wake up, and do what's right because God will repay you without fail.

¹³ Gregory, eat some honey once in a while. It is good for you, and it tastes good too. In fact, it tastes even better straight from the honey comb. ¹⁴ There is something else that is sweet to experience. It is when you not only have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>₁} but also the ability and determination to heed what they say when good men discipline, correct, or call you down for your own good ^{<instruction>}. Wisdom and instruction are as sweet to the soul as honey is to your taste. If you find real wisdom and heed sound instruction, your future will be bright, and your hopes will come to fruition. I guaranteed it!

¹⁵ If you are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}, don't set an ambush at the home of those who live in a good, just, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} or attempt to destroy the place where he rests his head at night. ¹⁶ Pay close attention, because the good, just, and lawful man will fall many times when wicked people create serious problems for him, but every time, he will get up and start all over again. You simply cannot keep a good man down. Oh, but such is not the case for you guys. Wicked men like you will trip and fall when difficult circumstances overtake you, and you will be destroyed, unable to recover. The LORD will see to it as surely as He will see to it that the righteous man is able to get up and start all over again.

¹⁷ Don't be glad and shout for joy when your enemy is either defeated or destroyed, and don't be glad in your heart when he experiences hard times or serious setbacks. ¹⁸ Be careful, because if you do, the LORD will not only see and understand the wickedness of your heart, but He will be extremely unhappy with you. If you are happy that your enemy has fallen, God will restrain Himself from punishing your enemy for all of his evil deeds because you attempted to punish him in the place of God.

¹⁹ Also, don't get all worked up and become furious about all the bad things evil men do, and don't be jealous of the pleasures and possessions men who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} enjoy for a season. ²⁰ Always remember the wicked man's end. He does not have a bright future, and almost without exception a man like him will experience a tragic and premature death.

²¹ Gregory, recognize and accept the fact that both the LORD and the ruler of your country have power and authority over you to reward good and punish rebellion. As a result, have a healthy fear of getting involved with people who are committed to changing the government by breaking the law. This is especially true if they feel that physical force is necessary to accomplish their objective. ²² It is important to avoid these people because sooner or later they will be punished for their rebellion. When it happens it will take place in a moment of time, and they will be scared to death at how bad things have gotten for them all of a sudden. There is simply no way to tell the extent of their ruin or how complete their destruction. The worst part of the whole situation is that both the LORD and the ruler will end up punishing them. It can't get much worse than this.

²³ The following verses are also sayings of men who have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise men>} .¹

To favor one person over another when judging a man's moral character is never good nor is it right, and it doesn't make any difference whether it is done by an individual or in a court of law. ²⁴ The populace of a nation will become indignant, and they will curse and despise one who claims that a man lives in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} when in reality he is one who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} . Whole nations will have nothing but disgust and contempt for anyone who does this. ²⁵ On the other hand, those who discipline, correct, or call a wicked man down for his own good will be greatly appreciated by good people. As a result, those doing the rebuking will experience peace and prosperity. ²⁶ When a man is concerned enough and chooses the right words to correct, discipline, or call a wicked man down for his own good, he shows as much love and concern for the man as if he were to actually give him a loving kiss on the lips.

²⁷ When you set out to build a house, do these things, and do them in this order: First, decide what you want for a house, have detailed architectural drawings made, and prepare a detail list of materials to be purchased. Then, lay the foundation of the house. Do this before performing any other work on the job site. Next, acquire all of the materials you will need to build the house, and have them delivered to the job site. Finally, have the workmen build the house.

²⁸ Do not publicly or privately accuse your neighbor of doing something wrong or illegal if he has done nothing to hurt you, and don't say anything to or about him in a way that implies something to be true when it is not. ²⁹ Don't say, "This guy hurt me, so I'll get even with him. I'll give him a taste of his own medicine." Instead, love your neighbor. If he has done something wrong to you, God will get even with him. Therefore, you don't need to do it. God will take care of it. Isn't that wonderful news?

³⁰ I happened to drive by the farm and by the vineyard of a man who was not only lazy but did not have the ability to think clearly or use sound reasoning. ³¹ His property was completely overgrown with prickly weeds. The fence that should have kept the wild animals out had large sections lying on the ground. ³² When I reflected upon what I saw, the truth of this man's situation dawned upon me. ³³ The reason his farm had become so run down is simple. He was lazy. All he wanted to do was go to bed early, sleep in late, and take lots and lots of naps. In other words, he was sleeping his life away. ³⁴ If you practice this approach to life you can expect two things to result. First, before you even realize what has happened you will forfeit your ability to meet your financial obligations. It will be like when a robber sneaks into your house and takes things, and you don't even discover they are missing until it is too late. Second, your need for the essential things of life and your desire to have them will end up being completely beyond your power to obtain. It will have as much control over you as if you were to be taken hostage by an armed man and held at gunpoint. There is simply nothing you can do about it by that time. So then, what is the solution? It is simply this: Go to work, and quit being so lazy.

Chapter 25

1. The following are also proverbs that belong to Solomon. They were copied and arranged by the servants of Hezekiah's, king of Judah so that they could be included in the book of Proverbs.
2. The LORD is glorified by keeping some things about His person and works far beyond our ability to comprehend. On the other hand, political leaders are praised and honored when they figure out things not previously understood by men. Whereas God is praised for the things only he understands, men are praised for the things they understand that are otherwise difficult to comprehend.
3. The universe extends upward far beyond what we can see, and it contains things we don't even know about yet. It is simply beyond our comprehension. The earth extends downward to its very core, and it too contains things we don't know about yet. These things are simply beyond our ability to learn and understand. In a somewhat similar manner, the motives, goals, and thoughts of a political leader's inner being are beyond our ability to fully comprehend.
4. If you skim the slag off the top of molten silver, the metal that is left is pure and ready to be cast into useful objects. It can then be finished and polished by a silversmith. ^{5.} If a ruler will arrest and punish those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds ^{<the wicked>}, then his political office will have a firm foundation. It will be one based upon doing what is right, upholding the laws of the land, and administering justice fairly. Doing this will remove the evil dross from his kingdom and purify his domain.
6. Don't claim to be someone of importance when you are privileged to be in the presence of the leader of your country, and don't stand or sit in a place designated for men of distinction as though you were one of them. ^{7.} It is much better to stand or sit in a place that is not among the privileged few and have someone invite you to move up to the dignitary's table than to be told, "You are not a dignitary. Get up and move to where the common people sit." This is especially true when you are where you can see the reaction of the ruler when you are told to move.
8. Don't be quick to tell everything you know when you're talking with your opponent or his lawyer before the case goes to trial. Instead, take your time. Be careful and deliberate in your preparation. Otherwise, what will you have to add to your defense when your case actually goes to court? Then when your opponent wins, everyone will look down upon you with disgust. ^{9.} Debate your case with your opponent and his lawyer in a logical, well-thought-out way, but don't disclose anything about another person that should not be made public so that you don't implicate them in the case. ^{10.} If you say something about your neighbor that should be kept secret, everyone who hears you blab such things or hears about it will look upon you with contempt. In the end your reputation as an evil man will follow you as long as you live.

Chapters 25:11 through 27:27 — Most of These Verses Compare People, Actions, or Attitudes to Other Things (such as "Like this, so is that," or "As this, so is that")

11. Hearing someone say precisely the right words at precisely the right time is a beautiful thing to behold. Those kinds of words are the focal point of the conversation the same way golden apples are the focal point of a painting mounted in a silver frame.
12. When a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{< wise man>} corrects, disciplines, or calls you down for your own good ^{<reprover>}, listen with interest to what he has to say. Listening is good, but it is not enough. To benefit greatly, you must respond properly to what you are advised. In the end, the one doing the reproving will be as beautiful in your sight as a stunning set of earrings worn by a lovely woman.
13. A faithful messenger refreshes and invigorates the heart of the one who sent him. Such an experience is as refreshing as eating a snow cone on a hot summer day.

14. A man who brags about his abilities or achievements when he either has not or cannot do what he claims is equally as disappointing as being in a drought and seeing rain clouds pass overhead without dropping any rain.

15. You can persuade a political leader to accept your ideas if you hang in there for the long run and keep telling him what he needs to hear. Then too, a soft answer spoken in a gentle way will accomplish much more than breaking a guy's arm when you are trying to get him to do what you want.

16. Have you found a bee hive with honey in it? Don't eat too much of it because if you do you will end up vomiting it all up. Discipline yourself to eat only what you need, and you will benefit in the long run. In any endeavor, discipline yourself not to overdo it - it just makes good sense.

17. Don't spend a lot of time at your neighbor's house. If you do, there is a good chance that he will become tired of having you around and end up despising you. Only go to your neighbor's house on rare occasions, and then don't stay very long. It is the best way.

18. There are three weapons that will do severe damage to a human body: a baseball bat will bruise; a sword will cut; and a sharp arrow will pierce an enemy. A man who lies about or slanders his neighbor will do as much damage to his neighbor as if he were to beat him with a club, cut him with a sword, or shot him with an arrow. Therefore, always tell the truth.

19. Relying upon a man who is not convinced that your cause is worth supporting is as painful as enduring an abscessed tooth or walking on a broken foot. When the going gets tough he will most likely abandon you and your cause, so don't depend upon him for anything.

20. Singing light-hearted songs to a man who is enduring severe pain, unhappiness, or misery is as inappropriate as stripping down to your underwear in -20 degree weather and as irritating as putting vinegar and baking soda in your mouth.

21. If your enemy is hungry feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. 22. By showing kindness to him you are giving the LORD the freedom to deal with your enemy as He sees fit. At the same time, your good deed gives the LORD a good reason to reward you in abundance for your kind and loving spirit.

Note: Verse 23 is different in NASB and KJV. Therefore, there are two paraphrases of this verse.

23. In the same way the north winds push rain into your area, so slanderous words spoken behind a man's back will cause the one spoken about to respond in anger. When it happens, you can see it on his face. (NASB)

23. In the same way the north wind pushes rain out of your area, so pouring your anger out upon a slanderer will drive away both the slanderer and his words. (KJV)

24. Gregory, it is much better to live in a rickety old room in the attic than to live in a house shared with a woman who argues, complains, and criticizes you at the slightest provocation.

25. When a man has run out of endurance and is exhausted, receiving good news from a distant country is every bit as refreshing as eating a snow cone on a hot summer day.

26. A righteous man lives in a good, just, and lawful manner. If he gives in or fails to stand up under pressure from men who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical deeds ^{<the wicked>}, his failure is equally as disgusting as a thirsty man finding a spring where animals had walked all through it leaving it a muddy mess or finding a well that had been polluted with animal droppings. Either way, both water sources and the previously righteous man are useless.

27. It is not good to search out all of the ways in which you are better, more able, or more deserving than those around you. Doing so would be like finding a stash of honey and eating enough to make yourself so sick that you vomit all of it back up again. With the honey you make yourself sick, but when you search out your own glory you make everyone around you sick of you. There is no honor in that.

28. A man who loses his temper at the slightest provocation is as defenseless as a city with no police department or military to protect them when a band of marauders invades a city and reaps havoc on the populace.

Chapter 26

1. A snow storm in the middle of the summer is totally out of place and shouldn't happen. A driving rain storm during harvest time is devastating to the crops, and every farmer hopes it will not happen to them. Ascribing praise and honor to a man who is simple-minded, ignorant, arrogant, and unteachable because he is bull-headed^{<a fool>} is as out of place as the snow storm or the rain storm. Giving honor to such a foolish and undisciplined man invalidates all that honor stands for.

2. A sparrow flies here and there, always moving and never staying in one place very long. A swallow flies south and stays there for the winter. Then it than flies north and stays there for the summer. In both cases, the birds do not have a home they can call their own. In a similar manner, slander or accusations made against you which have no basis in truth may fly close to the tree of your reputation, but they will not make a nest there and call it home.

3. A whip and spurs are used to persuade a horse to do what you want, and a bridle is used to persuade a donkey to move when and where you want it to go. In the same manner, a whip is used to inflict pain upon the back of man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed^{<a fool>}. Doing this just might persuade a fool to abandon his foolishness and live a sensible and disciplined life.

4. A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed. Do not answer him in the same manner or from the same perspective as he would answer you. Otherwise, you will be just like him.

5. A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed. Answer him in a manner that exposes the pride and self-sufficiency of his foolish heart so that he does not walk away thinking he was right all the time.

6. A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed. Sending a man like this to deliver a critical message will damage your cause as much as if you were beaten to a pulp, and it will cripple your cause as much as if you had both of your feet amputated. The problem with depending upon a fool is that he is always looking for some mischief to enjoy, and he will most likely get involved in something stupid and senseless on the way instead of delivering your important message. In the end, the help you had hoped to gain by sending the message will not come to your aid, and your message will have been sent in vain. Therefore, don't depend on a fool—ever!

7. Without exception, when a man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed^{<a fool>} speaks a witty or otherwise powerful proverb, it is no more able to affect people for good as the legs of a paraplegic are able to make him walk. A fool's attitude toward God, toward life, and his foolish manner of living totally invalidate the effect of a proverb when he tries to share it with others.

8. A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed. Without exception, praising or showing great respect or honor to a man like this makes honor as impotent as tying a rock in a slingshot so that the rock can never leave the weapon.

9. When a man is totally drunk and gets a large splinter in his hand, he is so overtaken by the effects of the alcohol that he doesn't even feel the pain. In a similar manner, when a man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed ^{<a fool>} speaks a witty or otherwise powerful proverb, it has no more ability to affect people for good as the splinter has the ability to make the drunk man feel pain. Whereas the alcohol totally dulls the drunk's ability to feel the pain, the fool's attitude toward God, his approach to life, and his foolish manner of living make the proverb totally powerless to affect people for good when he speaks it.

Note: Verse 10 is different in NASB and KJV. Therefore, there are two paraphrases, one for each.

10. A fool is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed, and does not seem able to grasp the seriousness of the consequences of his actions. Hiring a man like him or some vagrant who happens to wander into town is not a good idea. As a general rule, both of them will end up causing you as much pain and grief as if a sniper were to wound you with his rifle. In either case you will be hurt, so don't do it. (NASB)

10. Jesus Christ is the great God, and He created all things. He pays every man wages for the things he does in this life. He rewards the lawbreaker by letting the normal and natural consequences of his sin take their toll, and He rewards the man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, is unteachable because he is bull-headed ^{<a fool>} by letting the consequences of his stupid and senseless actions ruin his life. Either way, the LORD will punish them for the evil they have sown. (KJV)

11. It is a pathetic sight to watch a dog vomit up its meal and immediately start eating what he just threw up. Yet as pathetic and disgusting as this is, it is equally as pathetic and disgusting to watch a man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed ^{<a fool>} do something that is senseless and costly, be punished severely for it, and then turn around to do the same foolish thing over again. It is unfortunate that a fool seems incapable of learning from his own mistakes, let alone someone else's.

12. Have you ever seen a man so proud that he views himself as having the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>} when in reality he doesn't have a clue about what wisdom is or how to use it? There is more hope that a man who is simple-minded, arrogant, lacks good sense, and is unteachable because he is bull-headed ^{<a fool>} will become a wise man than that the proud man will become humble. Since there is no hope of a fool becoming wise, there is even less hope of a proud man becoming humble. (See Proverbs 27:22)

13. A truly lazy man will come up with all sorts of wild excuses for getting out of work. Some are as far-fetched as saying, "There is a lion on the loose. If I walk to work he might attack me on the road, and if I walk through the center of town he might attack me there. I'd better stay here in bed where it is safe."

14. A truly lazy man won't even get out of bed. He is unwilling do anything more than turn to face one side of the bed and then turn to face the other side. In the same way a door swings back and forth on its hinges, so a lazy man will turn back and forth on his bed. You simply cannot be any more lazy than that.

15. A truly lazy man won't even use silverware. He simply scoops his food out of a bowl with his hand, but then he is too lazy to go to the work of bringing his hand to his mouth. It is simply too much work. How much more lazy can a man get?

16. A truly lazy man sees himself as having more knowledge, understanding, and discernment than seven men who are able to give him good, sound, and wise reasons why he should get out of bed and go to work.

17. Grabbing a dog by its ears is a sure way to make him bite you. In a similar fashion, getting involved with an argument or fight that has nothing to do with you is a sure way to get those already involved to turn on you. Doing so will likely get you hurt, so don't do it.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹. A man who makes his neighbor believe something that is not true and then tries to say that he was just kidding is equally as destructive as some insane man opening fire on a crowd of people shooting everyone he can see.

²⁰. When there is no more fuel available, a fire will go out. In similar fashion, when there is no one around to complain, backbite, or slander others, arguments, fights, and disagreements will cease to be. ²¹. You see, the same way a fire flares up when you throw charcoal on hot coals or fresh wood on glowing cinders, so when a man who is argumentative, disagreeable, and ready for a fight is allowed to stay among you, he will start all kinds of arguments, fights, and disagreements.

²². Words spoken by someone who gossips or slanders another are like tasty pieces of candy. Once a person has tasted candy he is eager to eat some more. In the same way, people who listen to such things are eager to hear every word and accept it as truth. Unfortunately, some people really believe the things they hear even after the person talked about is proven innocent of the accusation.

²³. A mouth that speaks angry or malicious words and a heart that is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts deeds ^{<wicked>} are both as fake as a serving dish that has been plated with the slag skimmed off the top of a crucible. Using slag instead of real silver produces a cheap and ugly imitation of the real thing.

²⁴. A man who hates someone else will lie in order to give the impression that he does not. Don't be fooled, though, because deep down inside he is eaten up with a desire to get even with the one he feels hurt him. ²⁵. When he talks in a kind, courteous, or concerned way don't believe him because inside he is consumed with hateful, hurtful, and disgusting desires. ²⁶ Even though his hatred is concealed behind his cunning craftiness, in time his disgusting attitude will come to light for all believers in the church to see.

²⁷. A man who digs a pit intending to trap others will end up being caught in his own pit, and a man who places a huge stone in a precarious place intending to crush some innocent victim will end up being crushed by the same rock. The principle of sow and reap works this way.

²⁸. A man who freely lies about others hates the very people he destroys by his words. All the while, his words cause pain, suffering, of severe hardships for those he targets. Then too, praising someone excessively out of self-interest will ultimately cause ruin for the one who flatters.

Chapter 27

¹. Since no one can be certain what will happen tomorrow, or any other day for that matter, don't brag about what you're going to do, where you're going to be, or how much money you are going to make in the future. It only makes sense because many times our plans simply don't work out like we had hoped.

². If anyone should brag about you, let it be someone else bragging about what you are or what you have accomplished. Don't sing your own praises, or people will look down upon you as some proud, arrogant fool. In fact, let a guy you don't even know be the one to brag about you. That kind of praise is much more genuine and more appreciated than you tooting your own horn.

³. Medium-to-large sized rocks are heavy individually, and buckets full of sand weigh up very quickly. Hauling either of them will simply wear you out. As physically taxing as hauling either of these can be, being around a fool for an extended length of time will wear you out even more. You see, a fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. The way he constantly talks and argues about stupid and senseless things angers, irritates, or annoys ^{<provocation (dd)>} the listener and wears down even the strongest person. Unfortunately, a fool keeps on talking long after he has finished what he has to say, and if you spend much time around him he'll wear you out far more than you would ever wear out doing hard physical labor.

4. When a man becomes so angry he could kill, he usually pours out his anger in a cruel, violent, and uncontrolled manner. Then too, when a man harbors anger toward someone as a result of a real or even a perceived hurt, he will many times direct his anger at the offender in wave after wave like a flashflood careening down a mountain canyon. As bad as both of these things are, jealousy is even worse. A jealous man wants complete control over his prey, and he is suspicious of the person's every move. No one can hold up under this kind of pressure for long. The only way to get free is to break the relationship.

5. Being scolded, corrected, or punished in public ^{<open rebuke>} for doing something wrong is much more beneficial than never learning that someone loves you. Whereas you are made stronger and wiser as you learn from punishment, when someone hides his love from you, you may feel the loss of not being loved, but you will miss out on the blessing of knowing that you are indeed loved.

6. A true friend will lovingly confront you when you've done something wrong, inappropriate, or damaging to your testimony for Christ. It hurts to be corrected or called down for your own good, but because he is a loyal friend and has a strong sense of responsibility for your welfare, he will do his best to help you become a better person for the LORD and for those around you. This kind of concern is highly beneficial, and happy is the man who has such a friend.

On the other hand, your enemy hates you. So, be careful when he greets you warmly, acts like he is on your side, tells you that he supports your cause, or tries to convince you of his loyalty. Be careful because he is most likely only trying to trick you. He'll do this so that he can fight against you when you least expect it. It is better to have a friend rebuke you for your own good than to have an enemy try to befriend you so that he can have an advantage when he decides to fight against you.

7. A man who has eaten until he is absolutely stuffed has no appetite even for something as sweet as honey or a good candy bar. In fact, he is so full that he doesn't even want to see another piece of food. On the other hand, a man who is starving or is so hungry he has become weak ^{<famished (dd) >} will eat anything, even if it tastes so bad the average person would spit it out in disgust.

8. When a newly hatched bird wanders from her nest she is defenseless and leaves behind the protection and provision her mother provides. In the same manner, when a young man leaves home prematurely to wander aimlessly without a plan or destination, he forfeits the protection and provision his parents provide for him and leaves himself virtually defenseless. Such a venture more often than not breeds disaster.

9. A soothing massage or some good smelling perfume will make you feel really good inside and out. In a similar manner, when you receive wise, godly counsel from a friend it is sweet to the soul and gives you the information you need to make the best choice that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. This kind of counsel is a valuable experience.

10. When extreme misfortune brings great loss or sorrow your way, don't abandon your friends or your parents' friends and drive several states away to ask your brother to help you. It is much more beneficial to have friends close by who are willing and able to help you than to try to persuade a brother to drop everything he is doing and travel all the way to your house to help you.

11. Gregory, gain all the trustworthy knowledge, sound understanding, and good discernment you will need in order to make the best decisions that will produce the best results in every area of life and practice. If you do, it will please me more than I can say, and you'll make me the happiest father on earth. Then I will have all the ammunition I need to answer anyone who would try to accuse me of doing a lousy job of raising my son.

12. A prudent man carefully evaluates the consequences of every decision afforded him and only proceeds with those choices that will produce good and beneficial results. Since he understands what is going on around him, he will leave the scene when he sees wicked people doing things that will produce pain, injury, sorrow, and/or loss for others. He doesn't want to be there when evil deeds are committed so that he won't have to pay the penalty for getting involved with such ungodly people. Those who do the deed will be the ones who are punished. This is one of the blessings of being a prudent man.

On the other hand, a naïve man seldom if ever seriously evaluates the consequences of anything he does, so he will gladly join the fun when evil people do their wicked, illegal deeds. Then after the deed is done, he will be punished or have to pay back the loss some innocent person experienced as a result of his evil deeds. This is what happens when you choose your friend solely based upon how fun they are to be around instead of choosing them based upon his or her character.

¹³. When someone co-signs for a stranger agreeing to pay back the full amount if the stranger defaults on his loan, be sure to make the co-signer pay all that he owes. If he doesn't have the resources to pay the loan, take the clothes off his back as payment. Then too, when a man agrees to give another man's wife or a prostitute money for the pleasure of illicit sexual relations with her, make him pay everything he promised to give her when she agreed to go to bed with him. Pressure him if you have to, but make him pay everything he owes. (Note: This is Solomon's view, not mine.)

¹⁴. Can you imagine a friend coming to your house at the crack of dawn and awakening you by yelling at the top of his voice shouting out how good a person you are or telling the world all of the wonderful things you have done? If he were to actually do this, you would most likely tell him to shut up and go away. After that, every time you see the guy you would look down upon him with contempt for being so insensitive and inconsiderate.

¹⁵. There are two things that are extremely irritating. The first is a constant drip, drip, drip from a leaking roof when it rains. It gets old in a hurry, and after a while it starts getting on your nerves. Before long you will either fix the leak or try to get away from it. The second is equally as irritating, if not worse. It is when you must live with a woman who is always ready to argue, fight, or find fault at the slightest provocation. If you are around her much, you will find a way to get away from her and stay away. ¹⁶ If you were to try to get her to change her ways and become a sweet, gentle, loving woman you would find that it is about as hopeless as trying to hold flowing oil in your hands. You simply cannot do it no matter how hard you try.

¹⁷. If you rub two pieces of steel together long enough, both pieces will end up with sharp edges. In a similar manner, when two men interact over a period of time, one of them will become like the other. This is why we need to choose good and godly friends.

¹⁸. A man who plants and cultivates a fig tree will eat some of the produce he harvests. It is only right. In a similar manner, a man who looks out for his employer's welfare will be honored and praised by his employer. He will be glad to praise an employee who does a good job, informs him of potential problems, encourages fellow employees to do a good job, and simply works hard. The reward is almost always worth the effort.

¹⁹. When you look into the mirror, you see a clear and accurate representation of what others see when they look at you. In a similar manner, when others watch how you act and react, they see a clear and accurate representation of what you are on the inside. If you are kind, gentle, and moral, then people will know that you are a good, law-abiding person at heart, but if you are impatient, greedy, or immoral, they will know that you are a wicked person at heart.

²⁰. Death and the grave are never satisfied with the number of lives they claim. Men and women are somewhat the same. We never seem to be satisfied with what we see today or have seen in the past. Because of our sinful nature, we are constantly tempted to look again and again, especially at those things that are immoral or self-gratifying.

²¹. A crucible is used for low melting point metals like silver, and a furnace is used for higher melting point metals like gold and platinum. Both processes heat the metal until it becomes molten. Then, a flux material is added to make the impurities rise to the top where they are skimmed off and discarded. By this process the metal is said to be tested. In the end, all that is left is pure metal with no impurities.

In a somewhat similar manner, we are tested when we are praised. If the impurities of pride and conceit surface, we fail, but if we receive the praise with a humble spirit, we pass the test.

^{22.} A fool will never change. Even if you were grind him to powder he would still be bull-headed, despise wisdom, laugh at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argue whenever someone disagrees with him. Because he is unteachable and thinks he is just fine the way he is, he will never abandon his passion for doing stupid and senseless things that produce bad and costly results ^{<foolishness>}.

^{23.} You and I need to become extremely knowledgeable about how we invests our money, and we need to pay close attention to how well those investments are performing. ^{24.} This is very important, because they will not sustain themselves forever. They must be monitored and moved to other investments as necessary. This principle is true in others areas too. For example, administering a kingdom does not continue smoothly from generation to generation simply by itself. It needs to be monitored, changed, and corrected as the need arises just like our investments. ^{25.} Grass grows well in the summer, and dies out in the winter. When the next spring arrives the grass will sprout, and the cycle starts all over again. This is when other plants form new growth, and edible produce will be gathered from the growth. Our investments work somewhat the same way. They will make good gains for a while, and then they will perform poorly for a while. At some point we may need to move an investment to another one that is doing better. As a result of careful investing, the funds should grow to a sizable amount. ^{26.} These funds will certainly be enough to purchase the clothing we will need, and there should be enough extra to buy a piece of property if we so desire. ^{27.} With careful planning, there should be enough funds to buy enough food for ourselves, our family, and our household employees.

Chapters 28 through 29 — Most of These Verses Teach About Evil Men or Oppressive People in Authority

Chapter 28

^{1.} Those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} are always looking over their shoulders for fear of being caught by the police or being hurt by someone seeking revenge for the things these wicked men have done to him. Quite often these wicked men will turn and run when they perceive the slightest possibility of danger even though no real danger is actually present. On the other hand, those who live in a good, just, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} can boldly go anywhere without fear of retribution since they have done nothing to cause others to want to get even with them.

^{2.} A number of men have gained positions of authority in the public arena by defiantly stepping outside the law ^{<transgression>}, but the only way a nation can endure and prosper for a long, long time is when its political leaders are good men who possess and use trustworthy knowledge, clear insight, and sound discernment. These are men who base their decisions on the kind of sound knowledge that comes through diligent study of the Scriptures and worthwhile experiences.

^{3.} A poor man does not have the financial means to meet the needs of his family. If he violates, defrauds, or does violence to another man who is poor, weak, and/or of a low social class, he does as much damage to that lowly man as a driving rain storm does to crops when it destroys everything in its path. In the end, the defrauded man will have nothing left and will go hungry.

^{4.} Those who turn their back on the teachings of the Word of God not only turn away from what is right, but they will end up turning to wicked and evil friends. They are thrilled to boast about people who are hostile toward God and guilty illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>}, and they openly brag about the evil things those wicked people do. On the contrary, those who guard with fidelity their obedience to the Word of God and the laws of the land will attempt to keep their nation free of wickedness by actively opposing those who have abandoned obedience to the Word of God.

^{5.} People who cause pain, misery, or unhappiness for others do not comprehend the long term benefit to society by trying a guilty man in court, making a sound judgment, and extracting just retribution or applying appropriate punishment for deeds done wrong or unlawfully. On the other hand, people who through prayer and study of the Scriptures seek to know the LORD Jesus Christ better today than they

did yesterday, understand enough of the judicial process to know the benefit of punishing sin and rewarding folks for the good deeds they do.

6. It is much better to be a poor man who holds so firmly to sound Biblical morals that he won't have any moral weakness that will encourage him to engage in sinful practices^{<integrity>} than to be a man of great wealth who practices perverted morals that will lead him into all sorts of sinful practices.

7. A young man who knows the value of obeying the laws of the land and the dictates of the Scriptures as a normal manner of living is a son with the kind of clear insight and good discernment that will enable him to consistently determine right from wrong and then do what is right. On the other hand, a young man who makes worthless, gluttonous, or trouble-making men his close companions causes people to look down upon his father with disgust for having raised such a foolish and despicable son.

8. Some men gain large sums of money, investments, or possessions by loaning money to others at interest rates high enough that they should be illegal. Men like this get rich by doing such despicable things, but the pleasures they enjoy by taking such unfair advantage of others is rather short lived. At some point, God will strip them of their wealth and give it to a man who has a deep sympathy for the needs of others accompanied by a strong desire to come to their aid. With few exceptions, the generous man will give out of his own money or possessions to help meet the needs of unfortunate people. God loves to give good things to those who are generous with others.

9. A man who stops listening to or refuses to hear what the Scriptures teach will waste his time if he prays to God in a time of real need. The LORD simply will not listen to his prayer as long as he persists in his rebellion. In fact, the LORD hates the prayer of a man like this. The only prayer He wants to hear from such a man is the prayer of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as personal savior from sin.

10. An upright man is one who consistently does what is right in the sight of the LORD. Anyone evil enough to persuade an upright man to wander from or turn away from his good and godly manner of living to join evil men in their evil deeds will find that he himself will be caught in the trap that he has set for others. In time he will experience hurts, heartaches, and disappointments right along with the good man who turned evil. In the end, both may be destroyed.

On the other hand, a man who lives such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing^{<blameless>} will always experience good, pleasant, and beneficial things as a result of his godly living. He will not have to endure the hurts, heartaches, and disappointments evil men inherit as a result of their sinful lifestyle. This is true because he refuses to do the things that generate such punishment.

11. A rich man sees himself as one who has the knowledge and skill to handle any situation life may bring his way. He is convinced that his great stash of money and investments will get him out of any difficulty life may bring his way. On the other hand, a poor man with insight and discernment can see right through the rich man's facade. He knows that money does not solve every problem and that in time the rich man's money can fail him.

12. When a man who is good, just, and lawful achieves victory or a great success, it generates a great deal of glory and honor from the populace. On the other hand, when a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds^{<the wicked>} rises to power, men stay out of sight so that they won't be hurt by such a wicked man.

13. A man who tries to hide his sin hoping that no one will find out about it will never prosper. The guilt he must carry makes having an enjoyable and blessed life impossible. On the other hand, a man who is wise enough to confess his sin and give it up will learn that most people will show compassion. That is, they will have a deep sympathy for the hurts and heartaches he has had to carry while he was hiding his sin, and they will be quick to forgive him and help him recover.

14. The man who respects the LORD enough to do good and fears Him enough to avoid or abandon every sinful practice^{<fears always>} will always be joyful and blessed. Oh, but the man who has made up his mind to

go his own way and do his own thing will fall into all sorts of evil and mischievous practices that will generate disastrous results.

15. When a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} rules over a populace who are poor, weak, and of a low social status, he does as much damage to his realm as a lion rushing upon its prey or a bear charging at what will become its next meal.

16. A political leader who is consumed with taking unfair advantage of his constituents by using physical force, intimidation, or undue legal power lacks the insight and discernment to recognize the damage he is doing by unjustly taking from his people the little bit of financial means they do have. On the other hand, a man who hates any gain acquired by illegal, illicit, or unethical means will enjoy a long life and a prosperous political career.

17. Do not help a man who is guilty of murder. In fact, do not have anything to do with him. Instead, inform the authorities where he can be found, and let him run and hide from the law until he is either caught or dies.

18. A blameless man is someone who lives such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse him of wrongdoing. The godly lifestyle he maintains is the very thing that will bring good things back upon him and save him from having to experience the hurts, heartaches, and calamity that evil men experience as a result of their evil deeds. On the other hand, a man who adheres to perverted morals will practice all sorts of immoral deeds that will result in hurts, heartaches, and disasters. Ultimately, his own sin will cause his downfall, and when it happens it will overtake him so fast that he will wonder what hit him.

19. A man who works hard and diligently will have plenty of income. It will more than satisfy the needs of his family, and there will be enough left over to share with those in need. On the contrary, a man who is always chasing some get-rich-quick scheme or buying tickets for the lottery will end up so poor that he won't even have enough money to buy his next meal.

20. A man who always fulfills his responsibilities will experience lots and lots of blessings, and he will certainly be a happy man. On the other hand, a man whose driving force in life is to get rich will not be exempt from the damage his devotion to making money will do to his wife, his children, and his own future. Many men have already destroyed their lives and their future by such a fruitless venture.

21. You are asking for trouble if you give one person preference over another simply because you think he is more important or more deserving. It will never bring about good and prosperous results. This principle is true because for something as insignificant as a piece of bread many men will defiantly step outside the law in an attempt to get what they want and then have to pay for their sin when they are caught.

22. A man who has eyes consumed with greed devotes all of his energies to the goal of acquiring wealth. He hurries to be first in line where the money is being made. The main problem with such a venture is that in the end his money will fail him, and when it happens he will become a poor man. The sad part about the whole situation is that he has absolutely no concept of the devastation that will ultimately come upon him.

23. A man who disciplines, corrects, or calls another down for his own good ^{<rebukes>} will end up being more loved and appreciated than a man who says all sorts of nice things he doesn't mean in an attempt to get something from another.

24. A man who violates the law of the land and ignores the dictates of Scripture in order to rob his parents of what is rightfully theirs by claiming, "I have done nothing wrong or illegal ^{<transgression>}," is an intimate companion and imitator of a man who corrupts, injures, or destroys everything in his path.

25. A man who is proud and shows it by exaggerating his own abilities or self-worth in an overbearing manner ^{<arrogant (dd)>} generates all sorts of arguments, disagreements, and fights (even to the point of throwing fists). The future for him is not bright. On the other hand, a man who places his confidence in the

LORD Jesus and not in himself will do what the LORD commands. This kind of living will result in a bright and prosperous future. It is all about where you put your confidence.

26. A man who makes decisions based solely upon the emotions of the moment is a fool. The future for him is not bright. On the other hand, a man who has the knowledge and the skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisely>}₁ will not have to face all of the hurts, heartaches, and disasters the fool will experience.

27. A generous man will give some of what he possesses to help meet the needs of the poor. As a result of his generous spirit, he will never have a need that the LORD will not meet either by His own hand or by sending someone to meet that need. On the other hand, a man who looks the other way when someone needs help will find that others will talk badly about him, and those curses will be totally justified.

28. When men who are hostile toward God and guilty illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} rise to power in a community or nation, good men stay out of sight to keep from being hurt by such wicked people. On the other hand, when those wicked people are killed or die, more and more people start living in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} like they should have been doing while wicked men were in power.

Chapter 29

1. When a man has been disciplined, corrected, or called down for his own good ^{<reproof>} over and over and over again and steadfastly refuses to listen, he will end up being crushed or destroyed by the results of his sin and rebellion. It will happen in a moment of time and without warning, and there will be no way for him to find healing or put his life back together again. You see, once a man goes this far in his rebellion, the normal and natural consequences of his sin will take their toll. Oh, what a devastating end.

2. When more and more public officials start living in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} the populace is glad for the blessings and prosperity that result. On the other hand, when a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} comes to power the populace groans as a result of the pain and grief the wicked man forces upon them by means of lies, cheating, and unfair dealings.

3. When a son loves having and using the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>}₁ and responds appropriately when disciplined, chastened, or corrected for his own good ^{<instruction>}, he makes his dad absolutely thrilled that he has reared such a good son. On the contrary, a son who frequents houses of prostitution in order to enjoy illicit sexual pleasures wastes all of his money and is a big disappointment to his dad.

4. A good political leader will reward those who do good deeds, but he will apprehend and punish those who break the law. By doing so, he will establish his country as one that will last a long time and not be easily changed or adversely affected ^{<stability (dd)>} by those holding different political views. On the contrary, a political leader who takes money or favors in exchange for doing something wrong or illegal ^{<bribe (dd)>} will completely ruin his country. In time, all of his public officials will be willing to accept bribes as well.

5. A man is setting a trap for himself by praising his neighbor in hopes of either receiving favors or getting something of value from him in return. Once the truth of his real intentions become known, the one flattering his neighbors will be caught in his own trap and have to pay the penalty for his sin.

6. More often than not, a man who causes pain, unhappiness, or calamity for others ^{<evil>} will end up being caught in the trap that he has set for himself when he has either defiantly violated the law, broken a contract, or disobeyed the commands of the Word of God ^{<transgression>}. He certainly won't like what he finds when the trap springs on him and destroys his life and future. On the other hand, a man who lives in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} will sing for joy and be delighted over the good things God brings his way as a result of his godly lifestyle.

7. A man who lives in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<righteous>} has a genuine concern for the poor and desires to see that their rights are not violated. Therefore, he works hard to guarantee that they receive justice. On the other hand, a man who is hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<wicked>} is not capable of understanding what justice is, let alone see the need to help poor people in their plight.
8. Scorners are full of contempt and aggressively mock the Bible and those who try to live a good and godly life. They use harsh and destructive words to inflame the people of a city and make them discontent with the way things are. As a result, those they have persuaded to join their cause will become angry with the current leadership and burn with a desire for change. On the contrary, those who have the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise men>} know what to say and how to say it in order to appease the peoples' anger and once again bring peace to the populace of the city.
9. A fool is bull-headed, despises wisdom, laughs at sin and those who try to avoid it, and argues whenever someone disagrees with him. Once he has determined to do something, he will not change his mind for anything. When a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<a wise man>} has a controversy with a foolish man and must try to iron out their differences, the foolish man simply will not concede that the wise man is right. He will either fly into a fit of uncontrolled anger, or he will laugh the whole thing off as trivial. Either way, there is no way to resolve the disagreement because the fool will not let the argument die.
10. A man who will murder a man without any remorse literally hates those who live such a good life that no one can rightfully accuse them of wrongdoing ^{<blameless>}. This is unfortunate, but such is not the case for those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<the upright>}. They realize that the murderer is doomed to a devil's hell if he doesn't repent of his sin and receive Jesus Christ as his Savior before he dies. Therefore, the upright man wants to see this sinner live long enough to recognize his need for Christ and be saved.
11. A fool is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant. Every time things don't go to his liking he will fly into a fit of anger. On the contrary, a man who has the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>} understands the damage losing his temper will cause, so he is patient enough to wait until emotions return to normal before he tries to resolve a situation in a more calm and logical manner.
12. If a political leader feels that lying and deception are acceptable practices and listens attentively to those who do such things, it won't be long before all of the men and women in authority under him will begin to practice lying and deception in order to help them advance in the workplace. In the end, all of them will become hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<become wicked>}.
13. Poor people and those who through fraud, deceit, or lies oppress them have this one thing in common: The LORD Jesus Christ made both of them, and He gave them both eyes to see the truth if they are willing to believe and receive it.
14. If a political leader makes sure that the poor receive a fair and impartial trial and are judged according to truth apart from emotions, he will retain his political office for years and years to come. As a result, his political office will be secure .
15. Spanking a child in love and teaching, correcting, or calling him down for his own good ^{<reproof>} whenever he needs it helps the child learn the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wisdom>}. This will give him the self-discipline to correct himself when he is tempted to do something wrong or illegal ^{<instruction>}. On the contrary, a child who is allowed to do anything he desires without parental supervision or discipline will end up causing his mother to be ashamed that she bore him into this world.

16. When more and more people join the ranks of those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} then the number of occurrences where people defiantly violate the law ^{<transgression>} increases proportionately. But, those who live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} will live long enough to watch the failure, frustration, and disaster those wicked men will experience as a result of their sinful lifestyle.
17. Discipline, correct, or spank you child in love each time he needs it, and he will reward you with peace and contentment when he grows up. In fact, if you have done your job well, he will give you great pleasure deep down in your heart. What more could you ask for from a child?
18. If the people of a nation do not have the ability to recognize right from wrong or how doing right will enable them to accomplish great things, they will do whatever they want regardless of what the Word of God or the laws of the land dictate. As a result, they will end up being unhappy. On the contrary, a son who obeys the Word of God and the laws of the land will be full of blessings and joy.
19. A worthless employee will not change his mind and start working hard and smart if you merely tell him what he is doing wrong or how he needs to do better. You can talk all you want and explain how he needs to change, but unless you put pressure on him in some form or another he won't even indicate that he heard you speak. He knows what you said, but he simply doesn't care.
20. Have you ever seen a man who starts talking before he has taken the time to evaluate what he is going to say or considered the consequences his words might generate? There is more hope that a man who is proud, bull-headed, practices ungodly morals, and is unteachable because he is simple-minded and ignorant ^{<a fool>} will gain the knowledge and skill to live a godly life like God intended man to live ^{<wise man>} than that a man hasty in his speech will become a man who carefully evaluates the consequences of his choices in life and proceed only with those that will produce good and beneficial results ^{<prudent man>}.
21. An employer who goes out of his way to be nice to his employee and treats him with love, respect, kindness, and gentleness from the first day he was hired will someday find that his employee has become as much a member of the family as his own son.
22. A man who becomes angry at the slightest provocation incites all kinds of arguments and fights, and a man who loses his temper and flies into a fit of rage defiantly violates the bounds established by the Word of God ^{<transgression>} more times than you can count.
23. The way a proud man thinks he is better, more able, or more deserving than those around him is the very thing that will end up humiliating him in the end. On the contrary, a man who realizes his limitations and doesn't try to elevate himself or give the impression that he is better, more able, or more deserving than anyone else will end up receiving well-deserved praise and honor for his humble spirit.
24. A man who agrees to be party to a crime that a thief has committed or is about to commit does not love or value his own life or future. Whether or not he actually participates in the crime, he is guilty because he knows about the plans, and he won't tell the authorities. Therefore, when he and the thief are arrested and tried for the crime, he will be as guilty as the man who actually committed the crime. In the end, both will go to jail.
25. Basing your actions or reactions upon whether people will approve of what you do is a trap, and it will cause people to look down upon you with contempt. On the other hand, a man who trusts the LORD Jesus Christ and makes decisions based upon what God thinks about them, will be elevated to a place of honor and blessing. A man like this is safe and secure in the arms of Jesus.
26. Lots and lots of people try to get their political leader to provide them with the justice they deserve, but many times they are disappointed when he either can't or won't help them. Don't be among them. Instead, seek justice from the LORD Jesus Christ, because He is the only one who can provide it. In His own time, He will see that justice is served and that you get all that is coming to you.

27. Those who live in a good, right, and lawful manner ^{<the righteous>} find those who are unfair, dishonest, or unfaithful ^{<unjust>} totally disgusting, and those who are hostile toward God and guilty of illegal, illicit, or unethical thoughts and deeds ^{<the wicked>} find those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD ^{<upright>} equally as disgusting.

Proverbs Chapter 30

How to Rebuke an Older Son

¹ Agur, the son of Jakeh, was a wise father, and this whole chapter records the logical argument he used to encourage his two sons, Ithiel and Ucal, to abandon their detrimental attitudes and actions. As you read these eleven paragraphs, remember that they all fit together to form a complete picture. Read them carefully so that you can understand the logic of the whole matter. Agur was hoping that Ithiel would recognize his pride and arrogance and then repent. His younger son, Ucal had apparently followed in the footsteps of his older brother. Therefore, he too was included in the admonition. Agur chose this method of rebuke because these two boys had already grown up to be young men and were too old to be spanked.

The Surface indicators of Their Rebellion

A Lack of Respect for Authority

² "Guys, you think I'm stupid, and you think you know it all. OK, I'll admit it. You're right. I'm stupid! In fact, I'm more stupid than anyone who ever lived, and I don't understand anything about life. ³ I don't have any wisdom, and I don't know anything about who God is, what He is, or how He works in the affairs of men. ⁴ Well guys, since I'm so stupid and you're so smart, let me ask you a few questions. Who has gone up to heaven and come back? Who has contained the winds in His hand? Who has put all of the waters in His pocket? Who has established and continues to maintain all the laws of nature? What is His name? I am sure you know, but can you tell me His Son's name? You're so smart, surely you can tell me. Well, you can, can't you? Of course you can't. No man in our day knows. Tell me guys, am I to understand that you don't know everything after all? Maybe, just maybe, you guys are not as smart as you think, and maybe old dad is not as stupid as you think."

A Distorted View of Sin

⁵ Every word of God has been tested and proven to be complete, accurate, and trustworthy. Every man who has taken refuge in the LORD and His Word has found safety and security there. ⁶ Do not add to the Word of God by speaking your opinion as though God Himself had spoken it, because if you do He will discipline you and will prove that you have spoken lies. All you guys need to do is to see yourselves as sinners before God, and accept what He has spoken as being sufficient.

A Problem with Pride

⁷ Boys, I know that you guys are proud, arrogant, and expect the best of everything in life. ⁸ As for me, "LORD I pray that you will do two things for me. Keep me from coming into a lot of money, and don't let me become poor enough to be in dire need. ⁹ I ask this because I realize that wealth causes the rich man to be deceived into thinking that he doesn't need God. In his eyes he believes that his riches will see him through any difficulty in life. I also realize that poverty causes the poor man to believe the lie that God will not provide. Since he won't trust God to provide his needs, he will steal what he needs and then blame God for not providing. As for me, I pray that You will give me just enough to meet my needs but not necessarily an abundance of excess." Guys, if you want to find real contentment, humble yourselves and learn to be satisfied with whatever the LORD provides for you.

A Critical and Destructive Spirit

¹⁰ Boys, do not accuse another man of doing something you feel is wrong if you cannot prove your accusation in a court of law. Otherwise, when the judge asks for proof and you cannot give it, he will

pronounce you guilty of slander and the other man innocent of wrongdoing. After the accused man hears the verdict, he will curse you to your face, and your reputation as a troublemaker will become known to everyone. Guys, learn to recognize that it is not your place to be critical of others. Let their employer or the authority over them judge whether they have done wrong.

The Root Causes of Their Rebellion

A Lack of Respect for Authority

¹¹ There are four types of men, each of whom has a serious undesirable attitude problem. The first kind of man is disrespectful to his parents and ungrateful for all they have done for him while he was growing up. He curses his father to his face while accusing him of being stupid, and he is downright rude to his mother.

A Distorted View of Sin

¹² The second kind of man cannot see himself as a sinner. In fact, he is convinced in his own mind that he is a pretty good person and a real spiritual leader. This man may think he is all right, but God sees him as filthy and sinful since his sin has not been cleansed through confession and repentance toward God.

A Problem with Pride (Key Verse for the Chapter)

¹³ The third kind of man is not only proud but also extremely arrogant. When you look into his eyes, you will know that he thinks he is better, more able, and more deserving than you. When he looks into your eyes, he raises his eyebrows (and his nose) so as to say, "You're not good enough for me!"

A Critical and Destructive Spirit

¹⁴ The fourth kind of man has a twisted view about the value of human life. Because of his pride and arrogance, he has no compassion for the poor or for those who are suffering. He is not only unsympathetic but also intent on destroying such people. He is quick to find fault with them, and he uses his mouth like a sword to devour those unfortunate people. In his depraved frame of mind, he is pleased with himself when he is successful in ridding the world of one more person he feels is not fit to live.

Note: In describing these four types of men and their rebellious attitudes, Agur was hoping that these boys would see themselves as the ones he was describing. If they would recognize their errors, they would have an opportunity to repent and find real happiness.

The Cure for Their Rebellion

A Lack of Respect for Authority

¹⁵ The parasite stays alive by taking what it needs from the host. Because its nature is to take and never give, it always says, "Give me more, and I'll gladly take whatever you will give me." In a similar manner, there are three things that always say, "Give me more," yet they *will never be satisfied* with what they get as long as the earth remains. ¹⁶ Death will never be satisfied with the number of people it claims; the barren womb will never stop withholding joy from some women who desperately want to bear a baby; and the earth will never stop drinking in all the water that storms drop upon her surface. ¹⁷ Yet, there is a fourth thing that says, "Give me more," but this one *will come to an end*. Once a fire is started, it will refuse to go out as long as fuel and oxygen are within its reach. Once either is missing, the fire goes out immediately. Like the fire, the son who curses his father or belittles his mother will not do so forever. Just like the fire goes out in time, so the life of a disrespectful son will end in disaster someday. Wake up Ithiel and Ucal, I am talking about you!

A Distorted View of Sin

¹⁸ There are three things that are absolutely fascinating, and I cannot fully understand them. ¹⁹ It is amazing the way an eagle soars through the skies with such majesty, how a deadly snake looks so deceptively peaceful sunning itself on a warm rock, and how a little ship safely navigates a huge and sometimes vicious ocean. A fourth thing that fascinates me is the way a young man conducts himself when he falls in love with a young lady. He does things for and with her that he would be embarrassed to do if he weren't so madly in love. Now this man's association with his lover is a good one, but there is another kind of relationship between a woman and her lover that is totally wrong. ²⁰ It is completely beyond my comprehension how an adulterous woman can have illicit sexual relations with a man and immediately upon getting out of bed say, "I can feel good about what I've just done because I have done nothing wrong." Now, boys, I am sure that even though you guys feel you have never sinned, even you realize that this woman is deceiving herself. Now, can't you see how you are fooling yourselves about your sin just like this woman is fooling herself about hers?"

A Problem with Pride

²¹ There are three types of proud people, and they make life really hard for those who live around them. Then there is a fourth who makes getting along impossible. ²² 1) Life is really tough when a slave is elevated to a position of king since he demands extreme sacrifices of his subjects to satisfy his own pleasures. 2) It is tough when a fool has no physical needs to distract him, so he talks continually about his opinion on every matter, making you wish he would just shut his mouth and be quiet. 3) It is tough ²³ when a woman finally gets married and then finds out her husband does not love her, so she makes life miserable for the whole family. Each of these situations is hard to endure, but there is another one that people find impossible to endure. 4) When a maidservant is given authority over or is made equal with her mistress, as in the incident between Sarah and Hagar where Hagar's pride caused her to belittle her mistress. This resulted in a war between them that was impossible to endure. Guys, can't you understand how your arrogant pride makes you every bit as unbearable as any one of these four people?"

A Critical and Destructive Spirit

²⁴ "There are four creatures that are quite small among all the living things of the earth, yet every one of them has value. You can see it in the God-given wisdom they display. ²⁵ Ants cannot survive by strength alone, but they provide for their future by working throughout the summer to store enough food to survive the winter months. ²⁶ The badger cannot survive by his strength alone, so he finds protection by digging holes among the rocks where predators cannot reach him to cause bodily harm. ²⁷ If you find a locust, you can crush him in your hand, but locusts survive by running in such large numbers that there is no way to destroy them all. ²⁸ You can easily catch a lizard in your hand, but every time you catch one and destroy it, another one seems to appear out of nowhere. Guys, can you not see that those poor and afflicted people you are trying to devour have much more value than any of these small creatures?"

The Call to Repentance

You Guys Are Not the Lofty Men You Think You Are

²⁹ "There are four things that are rightfully called stately. Three of them are animals that are stately by nature, and the fourth is a man who is stately by position. ³⁰ The first is the lion. He is the mightiest among animals and will not back down from a fight. ³¹ The second is the rooster. His strutting around the barnyard easily distinguishes him from the hens. The third is the male mountain goat. These three animals can rightfully be called stately because it is their nature to act as they do. The fourth is a king when he leads his army while all of them are in battle array. Everyone who sees him immediately recognizes that he is stately. Ithiel, there are people who are rightfully called stately, but you two guys are not among them. All you have done is to tell me how important you think you are without doing anything to deserve the title."

Recognize Your Errors and Repent

³² Now, since you been foolish enough to brag about being important without doing anything to substantiate your claim, and since you have sinned by doing evil against people who cannot defend themselves, then repent of your sin. Confess your sin as sin to the LORD and make amends with the people you have wronged. ³³ As you consider what you need to do, remember that if you churn cream long enough it will turn to butter, and if you hit another man in the nose it will bleed. Be assured that if you continue allowing your pride and arrogance to consume you, the way you treat others so poorly will cause them to fight against you. In the end you will experience more hurts, heartaches, and losses than you can imagine. Here is your opportunity, boys. Please recognize your sin before God, and repent before it is too late.”

Proverbs Chapter 31

The Words of a Wise Mother to Her Son

¹ King Lemuel had a wise mother, and she taught him the kind of convictions he should hold regarding alcoholic beverages and women. He valued her advice so highly that he recorded it here so that young men for generations to come could read and learn it too. So then, royalty (queen mother) is advising royalty (king Lemuel) about how to live. The rest of the chapter is what she said.

² "Lemuel, you are my son legally, you are my son physically, and you are my son spiritually as the result of my vow to God. Please pay close attention to what I am about to teach you because I'm sure you will agree that I have more right than anyone else to advise you. Now, listen carefully, and do what I tell you.

The Positives of Why a Man Should Not Drink Alcohol

³ Son, do not develop a longing for strong drink or waste the strength of your youth by having sexual relations with immoral women. Be careful, because these things will destroy you (Note: This is the key verse for the chapter because it mentions both vices in one verse). I will teach you first why you should not drink strong drink, and then I will introduce you to the kind of responsible woman you should seek as your queen.

⁴ Lemuel, you are a ruler, and it is not right for you to destroy yourself with strong drink. These kinds of beverages will rob you of the ability to judge your people with fairness. ⁵ If you get drunk, you will forget what the law says, and then your dulled mind will pervert justice by making decrees that violate the rights of those who are afflicted with burdens and sufferings. It is important for you to be a responsible person all the time so that you can do your job well. ⁶ If there is anyone who would be helped by drinking strong drink, let it be the man who is dying. ⁷ Let him drink enough of the stuff that his mental capacities render him unable to remember neither his poverty nor the troubles that plague him. If he drinks himself to death, he will not have to remember any of those things in this life again. ⁸ As for you, my son, be a responsible person every waking moment of the day. ⁹ Speak up for the rights of those who are less fortunate and for those who are not able to defend themselves. Because of your position of authority, it is your God-given responsibility to defend them in fairness and with justice. So the key is **responsibility**.

A Shopping List for a Bachelor King Seeking a Queen

Her Value

¹⁰ Now, let me tell you about the kind of woman you should look for when choosing a queen. Since you are a **responsible** man, don't settle for a queen who only wants to be a figure head and do nothing around the castle. Instead, look for a woman who is excellent at carrying out her own **responsibilities**. She should be someone who is strong in body, strong in character, and determined to help you be a **responsible** husband. A woman like her is hard to find, but you can

find her if you look hard enough. I know your wealth is very important to you, but this woman is worth more than any amount of gems or precious metals you could ever possess. ¹¹ You can trust her completely because she will be careful not to waste your wealth, and ¹² she will be faithful and do good to you as long as she lives because she will be completely devoted to you.

Her Responsibilities

(Please note that this part of the chapter deals primarily with her abilities and responsibilities. It does not mention anything about love, affection, time spent with her husband, or time spent with her kids.)

¹³ Since she has all day free to do what she wants, she searches for the best raw materials from which to make clothing for her family and garments for her business. She is pleased to work on them with her own hands instead of delegating all of the work to her servants. ¹⁴ Like a merchant ship, she goes wherever necessary to obtain delicacies and out-of-the-ordinary items that enable her to add variety to everyday meals fit for kings. She should since Lemuel is a king. ¹⁵ She is an early riser, and being a good manager of her home, she gives each of her servant girls job assignments at the start of each day. (Here is the key: as a queen she assigns all of the work in the castle that needs to be done. Now she is free to do everything that she wants to do). She doesn't cook meals but oversees the daily food preparation and makes sure that her family has healthful meals. ¹⁶ When she makes a major purchase, she researches it carefully before proceeding. Once she has determined that it will be a good purchase, she will buy the item knowing that it will be beneficial to the family or produce a good return on her investment.

¹⁷ She exercises so that her legs, back, and arms are strong enough to enable her to accomplish everything that she requires of herself. ¹⁸ She has good self-esteem and is pleased with her success in business. She is careful to leave a light on at night just in case there is something that needs her attention. ¹⁹ Even though she has servants, she chooses to use the distaff and spindle herself to make wool and flax into thread that will be used to make cloth. She will use both the cloth and the thread later to make her family's clothes and the items she will sell to tradesmen. ²⁰ She goes to where poor people live and gives them a helping hand, and she also offers to help those in need if they are not too proud to accept it.

²¹ She does not fear what the winter months will bring because she has done a thorough job of providing each member of her family with warm and attractive clothing. ²² She also makes clothes for herself, and those she makes are lovely and of such quality that they make her look and feel like royalty. ²³ She supports and enhances her husband's reputation among the leaders of the city by her loyalty, dignity, wisdom, skill, and compassion for the less fortunate. Those leaders know that behind this good man is a good woman. ²⁴ She makes quality linen clothing and sells it at retail, and she crafts quality garments to sell to tradesmen at wholesale. She is very wise to diversify in case one market slows down. ²⁵ She is a woman of strength and dignity on the inside as well as the outside, and she has a bright, positive outlook toward the future.

²⁶ She is a knowledgeable woman who always tries to speak words of wisdom, and since she is a gentle woman, she interacts with people in kindness. ²⁷ Since she is a good manager of the home, she sees that her servants perform their assigned tasks so that her house is kept neat and clean. She is a meticulous, efficient, and industrious homemaker herself, and she will not waste her time sitting around doing nothing.

The Reward She Deserves

²⁸ Her children recognize how well she fulfills her **responsibilities** in the home, and they congratulate her for a job well done. Her husband also appreciates her and praises her by saying, ²⁹ 'Many women have tried to be the best wife a man could ever have, but you have done it. You have outdone them all. Thank you, dear! I am proud of you.' ³⁰ Don't base the decision to marry he on charm alone because it will fail you. Don't base marrying her on beauty alone because in time it will fail. Instead, find a woman who understands and practices the fear of the LORD . After all, her trust in the LORD is the most important reason she deserves to be praised. ³¹ Son, be sure to show your love for her by allowing her to receive the profit from her work and by encouraging the people of the city to praise her for all the good things she accomplishes. Do not take either of them away from her because she deserves to be rewarded for a job well done."

Footnotes

- 1 *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Copyright © 1997, Word Publishing, page 887.
- 2 Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Volume 17, *Proverbs, An Introduction and Commentary* by Derek Kidner, Copyright 1964 by Tyndale Press, page 35.
- 3 Strong's definition of "prosperity" is (good, pleasant, agreeable, right).